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**STRIP FOR
ACTION**
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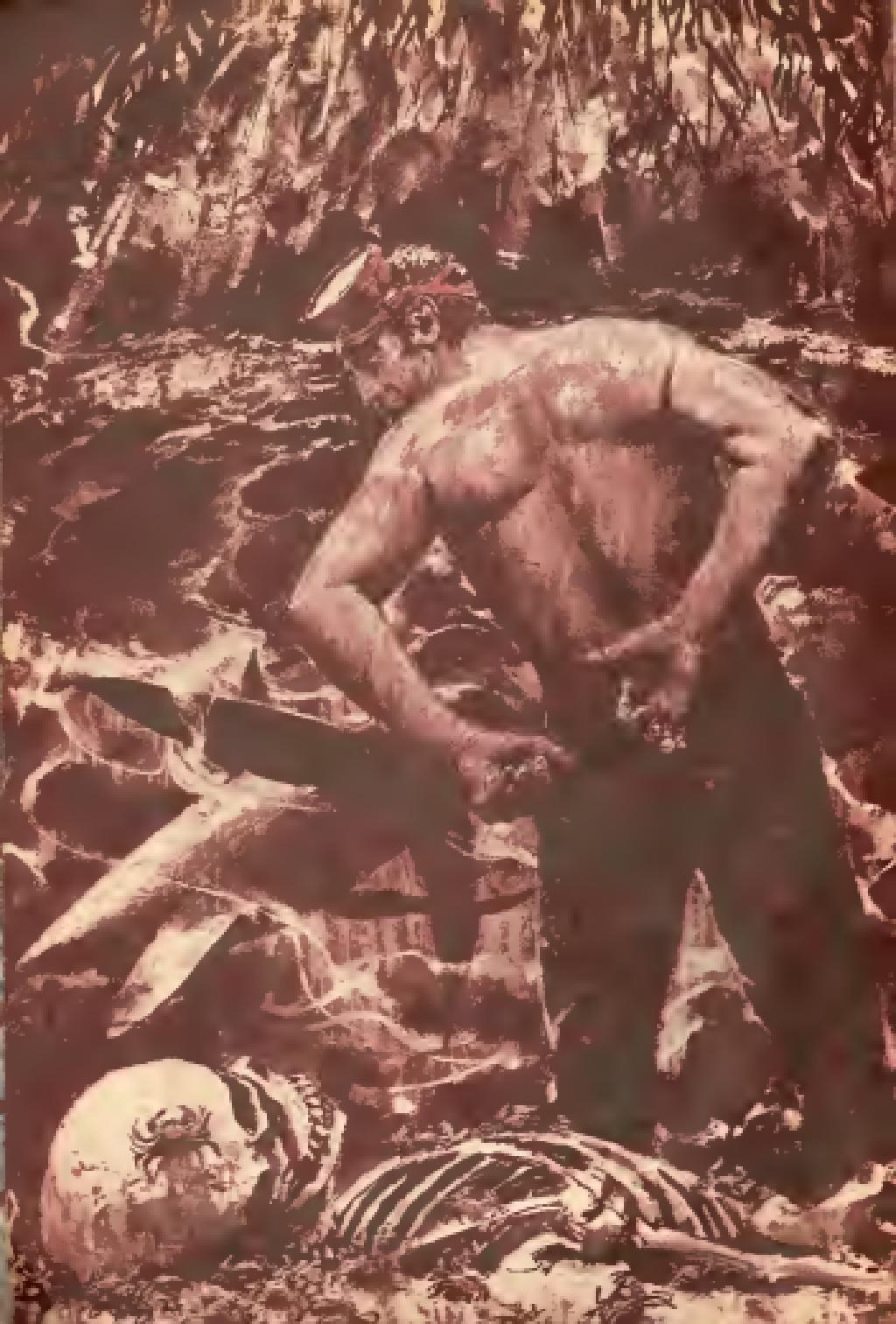
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The Shark God of Motura

Was the black reef *tao* because of the great white god-shark which lived under it — or did it hold another mystery?

FICTION / WILMONT MENARD

SAM POWERS, resident-trader of Motura Atoll, lit off the end of the cigar and spat out the discard. His eyes narrowed as he watched the native Polynesians loading their outrigger-canoes for the noon departure.

Most of the huts had been torn down, the old thatched walls piled high as a burning bonfire. Soon the native workers would go into action, bent almost double, smoothing and brushing clean the coral sand. It was the customary wind-up of the season when the pearl divers and coral workers went back to their home island of Takaroa, 28 miles to the south.

"It's a helluva relief to see the last of 'em!" Sam mused to himself.

There was a gruffing sound on the veranda, and he started nervously. It was old Runga, the Taha'a, or witch-doctor, who acted as spokesman for the laborers.

"Well!" grunted Sam. "What do you want?"

Runga squatted respectfully below eye-level of the trader, and studied him with heavy-lidded eyes. Finally, he spoke in a husky, rattling voice. "You come back Motura?"

"I've been coming back for the past ten years, haven't I? I always take four months' holiday in Tahiti when you pull out. You know what. What are you getting at?"

Runga cleared his throat with a dry hacking cough. Almost apologetically he said gently: "When you come back Motura you no forget bring money belong me and my people, oh? Two years same long time wait for what belong us?"

Old Runga was referring to the accumulated bonuses, separate from

their contract-wages, banked by the trader in Papeete, Tahiti, which represented the percentage-profit, according to law, which were due the native workers from the coral and pearlshell auctions.

Sam gripped the arms of the wicker-chair and half rose. "How dare you imply I'm not honest, you old brambug!" he roared.

"My people waited died waiting for money," Runga said.

"Naturally you're going to get your bonuses! I just forgot it last time, that's all!" He squirmed angrily. "You think I'm trying to cheat you, huh?"

"My people tell you ask you, so must know," said Runga patiently.

"Well, then you tell them to mind their damned business, and I'll take care of all business matters!" He bent forward and shook a furious finger in the witch-doctor's face. "And something else, too! Next season you and your boy workers are going to have to do a better day's job. The pearl divers have been laying up too much with the women and boozing. Furthermore, you're going to cut out wasting so much time paying your respects to that shark god of yours!"

Runga's head lifted slowly, and his eyes met those of the trader in a curious stare. "Meemako, our number-one Atua (God)," he said.

"Well, I'm your number-one boss!" snorted Sam. "I give you work, sell you supplies at a bargain price, and look after all of you. Your first obligation is to me, savvy?"

Runga's eyes shifted out to the South Pacific's shimmering expanse. He pointed a finger to a portion of the mottled lagoon. "You take that down now!"

Sam's eyes focused on the crooked pole with the sign TAPU that rose stonily from the high black coral-ridge at the northern end of the lagoon. "No, I'll leave at three until I get back. It'll be a warning to anyone who might come here while we're away."

Runga sighed mournfully. "Plenty bad 'bout Taha'a."

Runga was referring to Charlie Rawlings, Sam's late trade-partner.

The wicker-chair creaked as Sam angrily shifted his weight. "You liked him because you could cheat him here in the store when I wasn't around. Selling you stuff for almost nothing! We'd have gone bankrupt if I hadn't been for me!" He shot a skeptical look at the TAPU sign. "I sold him to keep off that reef, didn't I? And so did you. But he wouldn't leave. Kept right on fishing and swimming there. He was bound to get into trouble with that shark-god of yours!"

Runga nodded heavily. "All same, plenty too bad. Taha'a number-one friend me and my people."

Sam's lip curled. Yeah, he thought, your old pal Taha'a, always patting you on the back, giving you cigarettes, cracking jokes, boasting down in the village with all of you, laying up with your women! Well, when did it get him? Now you see Charlie, now you didn't. One day, at noon, your precious Taha'a was sitting on that very veranda, drunk and cursing the heat. When you came looking for him two hours later for a bottle of rum, he wasn't home, who he? Decided to cool off and have a swim off your tapu reef. And so Meemako, your shark-god, got him!

Runga rose to leave. Sam growled

at him "When the Moon finishes loading at Takaroa tomorrow, you tell Captain Riley to get up here fast. I'll be packed and waiting."

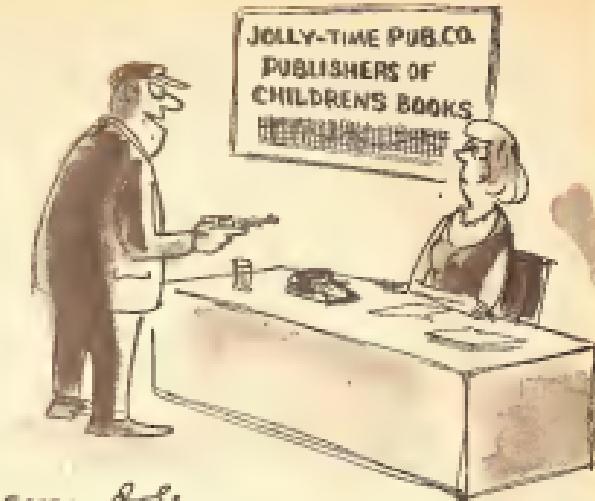
Two hours later the natives' outrigger-canoes were just tiny black splinters on the sparkling South Pacific, moving orderly toward the low blue haze on the horizon that marked Takaroa. Then, as always, Sam became uneasy about his complete abandonment, the silence, the sense of crushing isolation and loneliness.

As he sat staring out to the lagoon, the endless days of broken sunlight and humid nights passed in review. The long years with nothing to relieve the boredom. Always the same mocking wail of anti-sleep over the prospective coral reef. The sky was blank as a sheet of paper, every cloud dissipated, erased by the blinding sun.

Then he thought of his plan, his escape from Motara, and a chuckle gurgled in his fat throat: "Runga and his crowd will never come back next season when they get wood. I've closed down and gone for good. Motara will be a lost island, with poor Charlie's ghost walking the long coral beaches."

The silence of Motara became more absolute after sun-down. Now there were no sounds of laughter or singing, or flickering of lantern lights from the natives' villages. The evening trade-winds began to blow steadily from the south-east.

Sam roused himself from his chair on the veranda. He looked around and shivered not, mainly from the strong chill. "Damned spooky



George Sible

"My name is Johnny. I am a crook. You have money in the safe. Follow me the money is in the safe . . ."

place," he muttered. "I'll be glad to see the last of it."

In the small kitchen behind his quarters he ate a tin of sardines in tomato sauce and some hard biscuits, washing them down with a bottle of warm beer. More refreshing it would be to be back in Papeete, where one could have a good meal and an good bottle of beer — and night-long orgies in the Hotel du Pacifique with a fragrant, soft-bodied French-Tahitian or Chinese-born Tahitian where . . .

When he went to bed on his sagging canvas cot, he lay awake a long time, fretful because of the unconscious silence. Even the barbaric chanting and drumming of the natives in pagan homage to their killer white shark-god were preferable to this ominous stillness.

The next day, before noon, he was finished with the last of his packing and crating. He strolled down to the customary southern point of the rock to watch for the trading-schooner, the *Mona*, out of Papeete, on its course for Takaroa.

He aghed her almost immediately, sailing smotly in the narrow channel between the two reefs.

"She'll be over here before sunset," he calculated aloud. "Then we should be off and away before it gets too dark to clear the lagoon."

He waded in the direction of the schooner, knowing that Captain Riley would have his binoculars trained on the coral strand to sight him. It would be good to have some arms and jokes with the skipper on the voyage south to Takaroa.

Sam returned to the veranda and made himself comfortable in theicker-chair. He made a slow tally, by sight, of his possessions neatly stashed around him. His eyes at last came to rest on the racial money-box on the table of his side. It was packed tight with Pacific French francs, gold coins and pearls.

He ran blind fingers over its top and spoke aloud. "I've been lucky, very damned lucky. It could have



"I don't know how long I'm going to be here, my daughter has me frozen back on earth."

Australia's first shipwreck

THE BARRIER ROCKS of the Mores Bay islands, off the north west coast of Western Australia, were the scene of Australia's first known shipwreck.

The ship lost there, the English privateer Tryal, was also the first English ship to sight the unknown Australian coast.

The Tryal sailed from London in 1621 on an expedition to Java. But she was driven south of her course, and ran hard aground on a submerged shelf of rocks on the night of May 26, 1622.

Captain John Brooke, naturalist, sounded to be taken, which showed three fathoms of water alongside. He attempted to move the Tryal off the rocks by tacking her, but the rocks were sharp and the ship stuck fast. She was soon waterlogged and deserted.

When he saw that there was no hope of saving the Tryal, Brooke ordered his longboat to be made fast, that the boat could hold only 25 men out of a complement of 142.

Brooke and three men left under the command of the mate, Thomas Bright, to try to reach Java and seek help for the other survivors. But a day or two later the winds began to break up, and Brooke decided to try to reach Java himself with nine men in a small boat.

Brooke and his companions set off with one barrel of water and 40 pounds of ship's biscuit, and reached Java after 96 days. Bright and the other party in the longboat also arrived safely.

But no rescue vessel was sent out to look for the remainder of the men on the wreck. Brooke had known before he set out that his only chance of saving them would have been to move the ship on the high seas within a day or two. He knew that the 27 men left behind on the chafing, goring wreck stood no chance of surviving for a month or more.

Brooke's decision to leave the wreck with the bulk of his deserted crew until a rescue vessel had been sighted, but it cannot be criticized.

He was the only man left who could navigate, and he could save the last nine lives only by abandoning the rest. If he had not, he and the other 100 men left on the wreck would all have died there.

gone the other way. I might have had to share with Charlie." He sighed contentedly. "One thing I know, I'll never pass that way again, never, never, to help me God! I've most that carried my escape from the god-forsaken break of coral!"

Ringo and his lay gang could yell their heads off for all the good it would do them. There was no paper, no signatures, nothing to justify any action by the French courts in Tahiti. By the time Ringo and a delegation from Tahiti came to Papeete, he'd be thousands of miles away, in Europe or America. He had earned his retirement, and no one could stop him now!

The heat became intense just after midday, and tropical vapor finally overcame him. His head fell on his chest, and a few minutes later he was snoring on with eyes still clamped between his yellowed teeth.

When he awoke, the trade-winds had calmed away and the island's surface was only lightly touched by a vagrant breeze. Small waves broke on the coral island as solidly, so impulsively that the roar of the surf surging regularly across the barrier-reef was amplified and seemed very close. Time and destiny appeared to be strangely suspended.

A tone of anxiety, perhaps born of a segment of a dream, was running

through his mind. He stared with brooding eyes at the TAFU sign on the sacred reef of Motu. You should really have a last look before you leave, he told himself. You won't be coming back, you know. He set your mind for once and all.

Sam stopped quickly, placing his clothes neatly on the table covering the mosquito-net. Then, carrying diver's goggles and rubber fins, he strolled down the palm-shaded strand. The coral shallows, just above

water, extended like stepping-stones in the direction of the black sacred reef of Motu.

He reached the high ledge, and as he came up over its edge he stopped momentarily. There was that feeling again of anxiety, remembering the natives' awe and reverence of the dark coral reef. Then he gave a forced chuckle and continued across the reef to the pool.

He tested the TAFU warning, and found the pool still firmly wedged into the sharp corals. It would last a long time. Now, slowly, he approached the seaward edge and peered down into the water.

The sunlit water was murkified, and he could see very deep, at least to where the blue crack of the dangerous coral reef and face began, below which were the foraging areas of sharks, barracuda and conger-eels.

With a slight shudder Sam stepped away from the edge and glanced back toward the beach and trading-post. "I'm going to mess around here," he exclaimed. "Best to leave well enough alone."

But, he finally turned back, adjusted the fins and lowered himself carefully into the water. He filled his lungs with air, fitted the diver's goggles over his eyes, and沉没ed into the depth.

When he reached a depth of about 30 feet, he had to swim strongly against the increasing pressure. At 30 feet he swerved sharply around the great sulphuric stalactites branching out, like an ornate chandelier, which marked the entrance to the huge underwater grotto. He swerved, then turned and headed directly into the current.

Just mouth agape the sheet of purple shadow enveloped him, like the tide of night. The passage beyond seemed to diminish in circumference, and the outlines of



and visibility were softened by the diffused underwater radiance.

Sam swam slowly, with short breaths taken, looking only shallowly with his flared feet, all his senses alert to the subtle dangers around him. Such crabs were the natural hauls of countless and voracious forms of sea-life: the marine centipedes, the black urchins with deadly breathing spines, and the gaudy spider-crabs whose far-reaching claws could snap off a man's finger. And if

yesterday that I was in here

He was in a low, round chamber, recently hewn by human hands out of the inner top of the reef. The phenomenon was the result of the natural percolation and erosion caused by sea action in the centuries past, causing the soluble limestone to filter through the cracks and interstices of the porous reef, leaving a perfect shaped tomb. Ten feet above the roof of the vault was encrusted by narrow fissures which

polish the bones. But the smell around of Charlie's clothes had disappeared.

When Sam's fingers gingerly touched the skull they tingled as if in contact with an electric current. Turning the skull carefully, he saw the spider pattern of the brain-fissures.

So that was what the heavy blow with the rock had made thatateful afternoon!

He gave a low astonished whistle between his teeth. "Well, well, Charlie, there wasn't much use my fastening this wire around your throat, just to make sure, was there?" He touched the rusty loops, now loosely encircling the vertebrae at the base of the skull like a primitive ornament. "And I was rapped you over the head harder than I thought."

Sam settled down on his haunches and looked about apprehensively. How lucky to have found this underwater grotto, and to have had the courage to explore it to its limit!

It would have been impossible to bury Charlie in the hard coral growth of the still shall, and to have tossed the body over the reef into the outer ocean would have been too risky. The fishermen from the village and the pearl divers might have sighted the floating corpse. Sam recalled again the grueling task of swimming with the long rope through the underwater tunnel and then, after coming to the surface, pulling the weighted, sunken body after him.

The small crabs were now scuttling out of the eye-sockets, their antennae flattening like blushing ladies' hair, the other green scavengers were emerging from their retreats.

Sam gazed at the skull. "Now, don't look at me like that, Charlie." His voice echoed weirdly in the natural crypt. "And don't expect me to feel any remorse. Hating a man, like I did you, could only end one way, and you got it. You made fun of me for reading my books, keeping my brain active, thinking about other things than boozing, wasting time with the native divers, mounting their women. So all you have to feel sorry for you is a pack of lousy, lying-thieving Tumultuous, just the lonely chub and the red snapper to keep you company."

"I just thought I'd come down and tell you that your pearls and the share of the trading profits, per agreement, started to me — and so off I go into well deserved oblivion, sooner than I planned."

(Continued on page 64)

The huge sawfish of Australia

ONE OF THE STRANGEST offshoots of the numerous shark family is the sawfish, two species of which are found in Australian waters.

The sawfish family is midway between the sharks and the rays in form. The sawfish has a wide, flattened body with large pectoral fins behind the head which support the flaps of a sawtooth.

It has two large dorsal fins of equal size set well back on its body towards the tail. It is colored brownish gray above and white below, with large silvery shiny spots.

The saw is a long, narrow bar studded with sharp serrations carrying 25 to 30 teeth a side, grooving horizontally like the teeth of a saw. It has a secondary serration of very fine teeth near basis of the mouth.

The larger of Australia's two species grows to a length of about 24 feet, and a specimen of the size might weigh up to half a ton.

Sawfish live down on sandy bottoms close ashore, like their cousin the rays. They have not yet proved dangerous to men in Australian waters, although a large one was once reported to have cut a swimming man in two in India.

Sawfish are found all around the Australian coasts. They are often seen close to shore and survive at it for a considerable time. They have been found near the Mitchell Falls on the Gibber River in north-western Queensland, more than 200 miles from the sea.

In October, 1928, a 16-foot sawfish was harvested and landed off Murly by the crew of the Murly surf boat. A cast of it was taken in the Australian Museum in Sydney.

Sam collided with a giant conger-eel, it would be all over within seconds. He had seen pearl divers' mutilated bodies, attesting to the ferocity of this killer of the lagoons.

Thus, thought Sam fearfully, is like the passage along the river of death. He could fully understand the natives' terror of the black reef and the coral world below it.

Sam swam on and on, seeing almost blindly now, guided chiefly by vigilance and long underwater experience. His lungs felt as if they would burst, his nose began their warning cracklings. Then, abruptly, he entered an area of growing light. Confidently, he headed upward, and a moment later his head rose above the dark surface of a pool inside the reef. He gulped air noisily back into his cramped lungs, and the frightening sensation of near suffocation passed.

Then he removed his goggles and gazed wonderingly around. Nothing's changed, he observed. Seems just like

admitted air and light. Far away Sam could hear the muffled sound of the sea, like a deep, mournful sighing.

He pulled himself up over the sharp edge and then rose slowly, apprehensively, staring in dismay at the grisly sight.

"Jesus, God!" he whispered hoarsely. "That's my mouth!"

A human skeleton was lying on the rounded ledge above him, and, as he moved closer, an army of green crabs scuttled out of the eye-sockets, escaping into the coral fissures. Two smaller ones drew down slyly into the eye-sockets of the skull, squirming slightly for space, and they made the grisly effect of winking, bulging eyes.

Sam shook his head in growing suspect for the crawling legions who had feasted, after death, all that was human and familiar. The crabs had clawed away the decomposing flesh and snuck from the other dead corpse, and afterwards had come the slow, silentless sea-crabs to patiently



THEFT FROM THE CYCLOPS BUDDHA

He staked his future on a "human fly" climb after one of the world's largest gems...

FACT / ROBERT F. DORR

TORRENTS OF RAIN poured mercilessly onto his face that muggy night last May when a spiky American named Mike Ebbing learned the hard way what it's like to be an insect crawling across a man's face.

Ebbing used block and tackle to anchor himself from the crown atop the largest standing Buddha in North Asia, the 33-foot, one-eyed "Cyclops" Buddha statue which looms above the ancient Ssophassa Temple Ground in remote mountains of south-central Korea. In the sun-lashed night, obscured only by his girlfriend who stood far below fearing that every movement would send him plummeting to his death, 31-year-old Ebbing hung himself into space, capsule downward, and descended across the face of the Buddha — a human fly, thoughts in parentheses:

"Harry, Mike! You must hurry!"

The weak human voice, muffled by the downpour, reached Ebbing as he slithered his dangling body by clasping the glistening eyeball of the massive Buddha's head. Groping blindly for a foothold, he kicked back and forth until his foot found the out-thrust upper lip of the statue's face. He balanced

himself awkwardly, then began to lower himself, aware that a slip on the moist stone surface of the statue would send him plumping earthward.

Now perched in front of him, slick and glossy in the rain, the single eye of the Cyclops Buddha seemed to stare at Ebbing, defying him. It was a solid green emerald, one of the largest in the world, valued at \$370,000 and cut with the precision known only to a master jeweller. When the 300-year-old temple ground had been restored and the statue renovated a decade ago in 1962, the Republic of Korea (South Korea) authorities had decided to lure tourists by displaying the emerald — officially labelled Korea's "national treasure number one" and previously kept in a Seoul museum — into the Buddha's head.

"Harry, Mike!"

His water-soaked fingers lost the hammer! It went falling away, bouncing off the stone torso of the Buddha, plummeting toward Ebbing. Ebbing cursed, but wielded his chisel by hand and discovered that the emerald's mooring was loose. Heart-beat pounding, he clawed at the moist edges of the stone, closed his hands around it, and yanked it free!





"I've got her, Enzi! I've got the biggish thing!"

Below in the sun-swept temple yard, 23-year-old Kim Enzi was pulled, not by the "biggish thing" of the falling banner which came within an inch of cracking her skull, but by a sudden and unexpected sound behind her. Enzi turned to see a bulky military weapons carrier threading its way up the narrow road from the nearest village.

Suddenly, a searchlight clicked on. Its searing yellow beam blazed Enzi, outlining her tall, supple body against the base of the statue. Uniformed men piled out of the truck and a voice cried over a megaphone: "Son-ol halu raro! (Kiss your hand!) Enzi saw in the harsh glow of artificial light that the truck

not Vietnam, and that he'd just become a common criminal caught in the act.

Those stocky, wild young men charging at him with automatic rifles weren't like the Communist guerrillas Ebbing had fought on the battlefield in Vietnam. They were cops, in a country friendly to and closely allied with the United States. If they grabbed him now, pulling off his dramatic jewel belt, they would have the full support of US authorities in prosecuting him.

And a Korean girl wasn't Mike Ebbing's idea of where he wanted to spend the rest of his life. He made his decision instantly. He grabbed the girl's arm and propelled her toward their jeep. Another warning boomed over the megaphone as he shouted

Sea-snakes in Australian waters

AUSTRALIAN FOSSILS, 600,000,000 years old, contain the remains of many kinds of prehistoric reptiles which became adapted to life in the sea, but most have been extinct for millions of years, and the only truly aquatic reptiles in the ocean today are the turtles and sea-snakes.

Several kinds of sea-snakes are found in Australian waters. They are rather like eels in form, with long, flattened bodies and soft, loose, undifferentiated skins.

They have become completely adapted to life in the ocean, and are almost helpless when they are cast up on the shore. Their bodies are no longer suitable for movement on dry land, only for swimming.

Sea snakes are able to stay submerged for periods of several hours at a time. Their nostrils are closed by a muscular valve, and when under water these snakes can apparently obtain oxygen from the water by swallowing water and allowing it to bathe their lung tissue.

In the water, sea-snakes' movements are swift and graceful. They feed mainly on fish, including rats. Old specimens have been found with 200 scales and small tufts of seaweed growing on their bodies.

The most common and best-known sea snake in Australian waters has a bright yellow body, a very dark colored back, and a pattern of dark spots on its paddle-shaped tail. It grows to a length of about four feet.

In common with most sea snakes, its venom is very potent. But it seldom bites people, and fatalities are rare.

conflict with South Korean troops there before being discharged with a bronze star and several purple hearts.

Ebbing had become friendly with an itinerant American businessman, Joe Valdes, from Pasadena, California, who'd given him a standing invitation: "If you decide not to go home after the war, Mike, come back to Hangang-han (Korea) and work for me. My shipping company doesn't make much money, but I need a young guy to help and I'd pay you through the floor."

Maybe it's a lure for adventure. Maybe it's the intense stubborn streak most people attribute to Mike Ebbing's character. More likely, it's just a desire to avoid a hundred-goddam sentence. Whatever drives Ebbing's personality, he's spent the last five years living in a modest flat in Seoul's Han River Apartments and working for the shipping firm.

Ebbing left the company for rights to try a D&C job (Department of the Army ordnance), went through a short-lived marriage to a pretty Korean girl ("She wanted to go to the States and I didn't"), and purchased his present flat, only after meeting a new girl, Kim Enzi, in the early spring of 1972.

A lousy day at the office. Ebbing's small shabby firm was losing money and a decking strike had killed the month's profits. Ebbing was hitting the bottle too much lately, even knowing well to start drinking early, and he knew he was getting too much like many other Americans who lived overseas — disgruntled, unstable, and prone to alcohol. That didn't prevent him, on April 10, 1972, from sauntering into his favorite bar in Seoul's entertainment district and sitting alone, chugging chrysanth (soju wine).

It was snowing. Ebbing spotted the girl the moment he stepped outside and he had to skirt around patches of ice as he followed her through the narrow, snow-splashed alleys of the downtown entertainment district. She was quickening her pace and he knew that if he didn't speed up, he would never find out what she looked like from the front.

Unsafely, the girl stopped to peer into a dress shop. She stood for a long minute in a crouching pose, one shapely leg thrown back at right angles from the folds of her coat, her head cocked sideways, her long dark hair bunched up against the coat's collar. She was willowy, shoulder-length to Ebbing's knee six feet, her arms clasped on the little body so that her bright scared eyes

were enblazoned with the five-pointed Silver dragon of the National Police.

"We're caught!" Mike Ebbing told himself. The stolen emerald in his hand, Ebbing rappelled downward across the sheet, room, and legs of the giant stone Buddha.

He crashed into a heap in the mud at Enzi's side, only feet from their jeep. Dazed, gasping, confused by the blinding searchlight, he peered at the police vehicle 300 yards away and saw rifle-armed police spilling to the ground while the man with the megaphone screamed: "Unemployment! More! (Don't meant)"

Ebbing swallowed, looked at his jeep, and wondered whether to surrender or try a break. He reminded himself that this was Korea.

into her coat, "Enzi! We've got to try a break for it! Stick with me!"

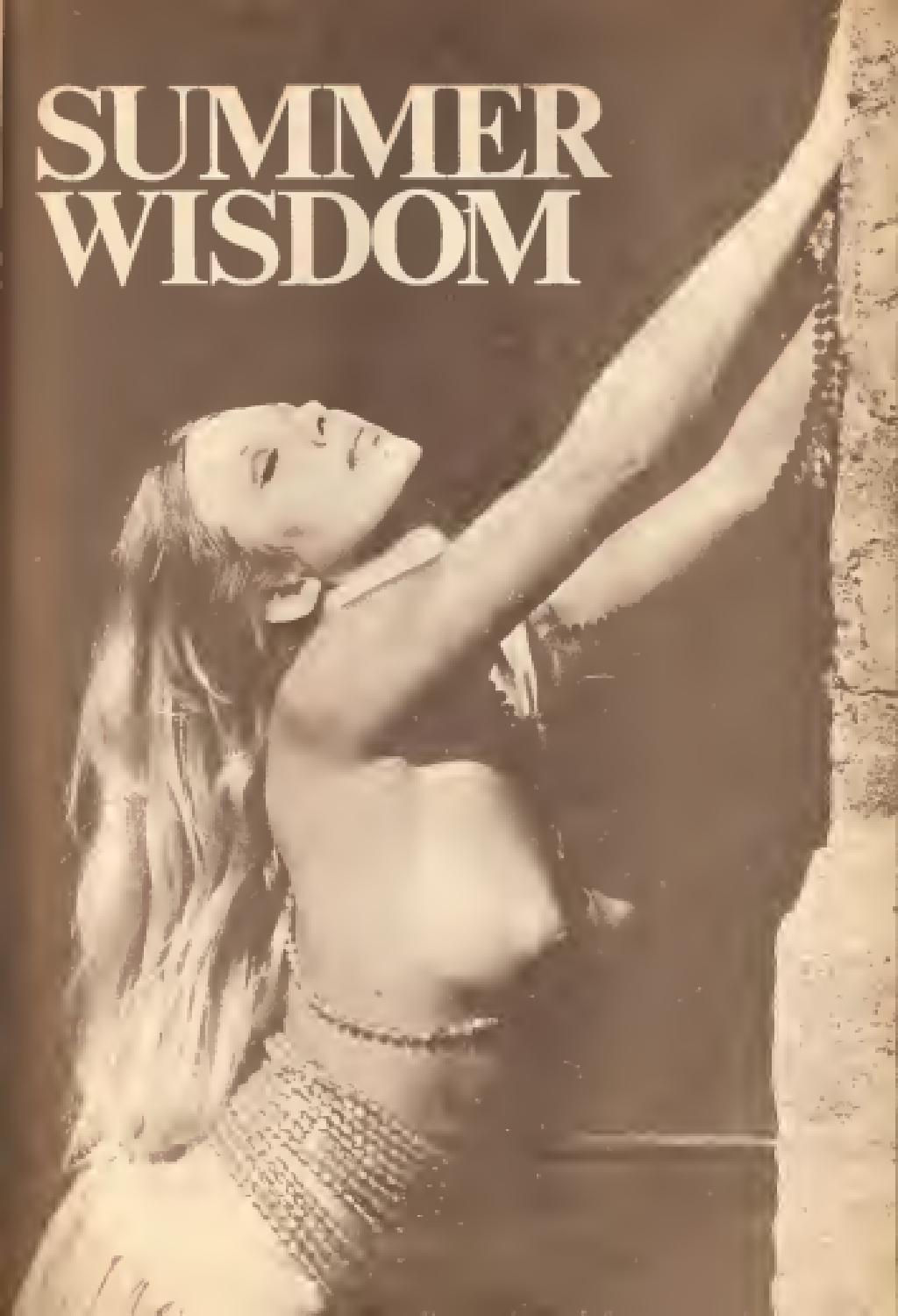
They clambered into the jeep just as the police opened fire, muzzle flashes blinding against the rain, bullets chewing rapidly into the side of the vehicle.

Lean, grim-faced Michael R. Ebbing, originally from Alexandria, Virginia, belongs to the colony of several hundred Americans who've escaped reality living by making their homes in the Republic of Korea where 40,000 GIs will man an uneasy peace line.

Ebbing served with the US Army in Korea in 1963-65 in a sensitive intelligence job for which he received training in the Korean language. Later, he went to Vietnam to serve in

(Continued on page 77)

SUMMER WISDOM





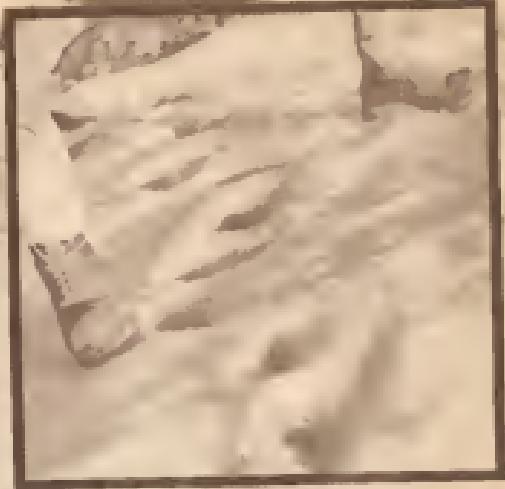
SUMMER WISDOM

Pauline's been down
for a swim today,
between the old rocks
at the edge of the bay,

and now she's asleep
where the warm wind blows,
taking it easy,
because she knows

that the pleasantest things
in life are three—
the sun, the wind
and the cool deep sea . . .





ON THE TRAIL OF THE YETI

Another expedition is now in the Himalayas in search of the answer to the last and deepest of Nature's mysteries.

FACT / E. R. YARHAM

TOWARD THE END of last year a party of six Americans scientists left on a 15-month expedition into eastern Nepal, with the aim of penetrating into the Arun river valley between the two Himalayan giants, Everest and Kangchenjunga. This is the land of the yeti, the Abominable Snowman. Nepalese natives say these creatures live somewhere in the upper reaches of the valley, and the explorers hope to spot a specimen of the elusive tribe.

Slippery customers the yetis may be, but according to legend they can make their presence comparatively obvious when it suits their purpose. Not so long back some were maliciously raiding village flour mills, and a year or two ago other yetis were making an indecisive nuisance of themselves by undoing every job of work undertaken by the villagers.

They uprooted the potatoes, ruined the houses, and dined the bacon hung out to dry. The victims of these Packish antics dealt sharply and traditionally (if severely) with the intruders by placing large bowls of

chang (home-brewed rice beer) in prominent places near their houses.

Next night the snowmen, interested as apparently only yetis can get, were easily slaughtered. Just a folk tale, of course, but there is a lot more to the yeti than mere fable, and the proof is not so easily disposed of as this single story might suggest.

The enigma of the Abominable Snowman, alias the yeti, has dogged western explorers of the Himalayas for the past half century, ever since the first Everest reconnaissance of 1921. Eric Shipton, one of the

best-known Himalayan climbers of the century, said that Sherpa Tenzing, who climbed Everest with Sir Edmund Hillary in 1953, told him that he, together with a large number of other Sherpas, had seen a yeti at a distance of about 25 yards.

In his account Shipton wrote: "He describes it as half man, half beast, about five feet six inches tall, covered with reddish-brown hair but with a hairless face. Whatever it was that he saw, I am convinced of his sincerity. That night as we were settling down to sleep, he remarked:

(Continued on page 63)



LEFT

A line of wide, deep yet tracks across a high Himalayan snowfield.

INSET TOP

Close-up of yeti tracks, with climber's foot for comparison. The tracks are not the largest known—but note how the creature's weight has crushed down into the snow.

INSET BELOW

An artist's reconstruction of a yeti, from Dr Fraser's description.

RIGHT

The Chief Lama of Khamser village holding the alleged yeti scalp which was sent to Sir Edmund Hillary in 1950.

THE LEAD NIGHTINGALE

Nearly 20 years after he attacked the girl, Big Lon came back to his mountain home. Now he was a big success, a star. But nobody had yet forgotten the other thing...

FICTION / ROBERT G. HAILE

FOR SOME unexplained reason big Lon McCabe, the country boy with the golden larynx, was visiting Mount Side, his boyhood home. It had been a long time since Big Lon had seen his people. That night he had been the reason for his visit. Or was it something else?

With TV appearances, night club engagements, recording interests and loving women, Big Lon had little time to spare. His current release, *Godfreak*, already running hot and climbing the charts, had recruited him into the bright lights again.

So why was he taking time off when he should be tring it up in the winners' circle, wined and dined by agents, sending copy for the booking paper and magazine reporters?

Maybe Big Lon still remembered that spring was the best time of the year in Mount Side. The golden winters were resplendent at this season. Or it could have been nostalgia for the songbouts held in "The Saug."

I'm certain he remembered those. It was at one of these festivals that he first saw Carmen Chavis.

That was a long time ago, 19 years to be exact. But it could be that he knew the festival started tomorrow. It could be that he wanted to be there for some other reason. Did he have some compunction about Carmen, for instance?

Carmen Chavis is my older sister. Her marriage to Andre Broto is still holding together, as it has for 18 years. Not many men would have taken Carmen Chavis, after that night at The Saug. But Andre did.

Andre is a big man physically, as strong as a Native bull, quick tempered and emotional. But with Carmen Chavis he's as gentle as a rabbit. For some reason Carmen Chavis can do no wrong in Andre's eyes.

People at Mount Side never talk about what happened to her that night at The Saug. They were given to talk about almost everything else, but that subject wasn't very healthy.

Mount Side people can be close-mouthed when it comes to their women. Even more close-mouthed when something happens to one of them. But that doesn't say they've forgotten — and that includes Andre.

I haven't forgotten one single detail of that early dawn at The Saug, 19 years ago. Andre hasn't either. He was reading the newspaper as he ate his lunch at the gravel quarry when he saw the story about Big Lon coming home. He didn't say a word, but I was washing and I saw his bony hands clutching the paper tighter.

Even the women in The Saug haven't forgotten the night Big Lon hurt Carmen Chavis. But only once have I heard anyone make an open statement about it. Old Tommy Bam, one of the residents of The Saug, stood there looking at Carmen Chavis that dawn, lying there too weak and hurt even to stagger home.

"Any man who hurts a woman like Big Lon did —" he began, but he left the sentence unfinished. He stooped and picked up his corner of the blanket-wreath girnatcher so we could carry Carmen Chavis home.

They say time is a cure-all. Carmen Chavis has been married to Andre for a long time and they have a daughter now, Marisa, a younger reflection of her mother and every bit as pretty.

Tale McBride, Lon's older brother and Tale's wife live next to us on the Yenam Road at The Saug. They are the only people Lon has on the mountain, so I was sure I'd see him when he came home.

Big Lon wouldn't waste the opportunity of letting everyone know how he had made it to the top. He ago demanded that much. And it would be convenient for him to pretend he had forgotten what had happened 19 long years ago.



We expected to see Len's impudent, left-wheel-drive Mustang climb the giddy-ridiculous Yamam Road, but we were disappointed. Big Len came in on his own two feet, stagng, head bowed high, proud and a giant.

A lot of stories and down-right lies might have been manufactured around Big Len but one fact remained — he had a voice and it could charm even the rapturings listening to him was an emotional experience. He possessed pathos and love and thunder that could swell and drown you in a single note. And he could wind himself up in one of his writhed sad songs and have you crying and feeling glad you were. That's what Big Len could do.

And the past with the golden layex was a born showman. His clothes, every color of the rainbow, and rings on his fingers held stones as big as chicken eggs.

I was wondering how he would look when he came home. Everyone was, I think, and he didn't disappoint us. We had to remember that he wasn't a boy any more. He was in his forties now, and had led a life of ease. He should be pot-bellied at least.

But Big Len wasn't. He was a towering, six-foot-three giant, with wide shoulders, tanned body, a bounce in his step. He looked incredibly healthy, without so much as a strand of grey in his black hair.

He came striding up the Yamam Road, strumming his open-mouth guitar and singing Godfrost, and I think we all tended to forget and for an instant we loved him and felt proud because he was of us and he had come home.

Such a pied piper. The kids went to him, because they didn't know any better. But how could they know about Carmen Chants and that night?

Mama stood beneath the big split gum with another girl. They were too big and shy to run behind a singing man. But they wanted to, and it showed on their faces.

"Uncle Ralph, who's that man?" she called out.



The fantastic stick insects

THE AUSTRALIAN stick insects — members of the order phasmida — are among the great masters of camouflage of the animal world. While other insects conceal themselves with color, these insects use their entire body as a disguise.

The stick insects have long, thin, articulated bodies and stiff fragile legs, so that they resemble dried twigs of the plants they live among. Some species may be more than a foot long.

These slow-moving, vegetarian insects live on eucalypts, waratahs and grasses, and need their disguise to avoid the attention of predators. The stick insect often extends its first pair of legs in front of its head as a protection of its body, and holds the others close against its body to further the illusion.

Many species of stick insect have the habit of falling to the ground at once when they are disturbed, and then lying there without moving for long periods.

If attacked and gripped by a leg, they are capable of cutting it off in a forced shear at will. Young specimens are capable of growing their lost legs, although these additional legless regions will not.

A few species of stick insect which are very common successfully threaten to damage forests, and control measures may have to be taken against them some day to restore the balance of the ecology.

luck was still holding out and I didn't know if I should be happy or sad.

The all-night concert at The Song was the best ever, thanks to Big Lon, damn his beautiful voice. I think everyone forgot about him during *Carmen Chalet*, or perhaps it was just convenient for the older to let their memories dim this once. Big Lon sang his songs, he captivated Menna most of all.

I saw Andre at the edge of the crowd. I went over to him to say hi again and we walked off into the scrub together.

"Does Menna know anything at all about Big Lon?"

He shook his head. "No, Ralph. And why should she?"

"Maybe you should tell her."

"I'm not going to tell her about her brother." His mouth went tight.

He had a pause, but I had to say what was on my mind.

"Menna's a young girl. Lon is one of them gilded pop-shots. Maybe you should tell her."

He gave me a frightening look. "Lon wouldn't dare, Ralph. Not here, not again."

I hoped he was right, but I had seen the look of adoration in Menna's eyes.

Later, when Andre had gone off on his own in one of his black moods, I saw Menna on her own

I looked at her for a long time. She was so damned beautiful, so lovely, and Big Lon was singing a sad song that touched you inside.

"It's Big Lon coming home to see his brother — "

Her sulky mouth softened into a smile. Her eyes sparkled like dipped brown pebbles in a creek.

"Up he's staying long. Uncle Ralph?"

"I dunno."

"Say, I've seen his face before. He's the Godfather man. Why, he's famous, he's a star," she said rather excited as he came closer. "And he's here in Mount Stile."

"Yeah, that's right," I muttered. "As large and as ugly as he."

"He's not ugly, Uncle Ralph," she said, not understanding "He's a real hunk. Don't you like him Uncle Ralph?"

"He's a good singer."

"But you don't like him!"

I shrugged, but her eyes were on me trying to understand. She was too persistent.

"It's his clothes, I guess. I'm not in his generation or something."

He saw us now and headed our way throwing the guitar over his shoulder like a gun.

"Ralph. You ain't skinny any more."

His big hand reached out and grabbed mine. It reminded me that he was strong and a soldier.

He looked away and saw Menna.

"Who's the brown-eyed angel, Ralph?" There was more than a passing interest in his words and his eyes that watched over her.

"Carmen Chalet's daughter."

If I expected him to wince then I

visited my time. Already he had turned to Menna. His big hands were on her shoulders, and he was smiling and talking softly to her like they had known each other for a long time.

I was glad Andre was earing gravel at the quarry, awfully glad and Carmen had gone down to the store in her old Ford, and you could hear that coming a mile away. Big Lon's



"My love has been fired me for getting fresh."



"We're going to have to transfer Hopkins out of quality control!"

looking like she had been visited by the fairy godmother. She raced towards me, and that uncertain feeling inside of me grew into something big.

"Uncle Ralph, Uncle Ralph!" She stopped and caught her breath. "Big Len, you know what he said? He heard me sing one song and I was good, not just good, fantastic. And he's going to arrange a TV audition for me when he gets back to Mel-bourne."

I shook my head. What could I say? What could anyone say? Maybe Andre would get drunk like he sometimes did and pass out before Maxine had time to tell him her news. I hoped so, anyway.

On the fourth night of the songfest, Big Len didn't show up. It gave me an idea — something born from frustration. But it was a compulsion and I was driven to it. I walked down the hallway thinking it over, and knocked on brother Talc's door firmly.

Such a surprise. Neither Talc nor Len opened the door, but an attractive woman of about 28, tall and slender with a nicely chiseled face. There was a sadness around her eyes and tiny crow's feet at the corners of her mouth. But her hair was magnificent, a red fire capped with gold, and that was what caught my breath.

"Yes?" she asked in a raspy voice.

"I'm looking for Big Len."

"Big Len isn't in." The smile was artificial and not. "Who are you?"

"Ralph. I live next door. Next

door is about half a mile away, I guess that's why I haven't seen you until now."

"I came last night, late, that's more likely the reason. You would have been asleep. There wasn't a light on the mountain after ten."

"Mountain people go to bed early," I grumbled.

I took better stock of her. She was wearing a blue housecoat, and by

the way it clung to her body I guessed very little else. She took a step through the door, and close to her eyes were wild and big but at the same time frank and honest. I think I liked her.

"Something on your mind? You can tell me if there is."

"Perhaps," I hedged.

"Anything to do with a pretty young thing called Maxine? She was up here yesterday, I hear."

"Was she? I didn't know."

"Something she you probably don't know. Len is with her somewhere tonight. Was that what you wanted to say?"

I grabbed her shoulders and shook her, not knowing what I was doing. "You're lying." I decided I didn't like her after all. She was one of those city types.

"Why should I lie?" she spat.

She had a point. I stood there feeling silly with my hands still on her. The housecoat passed now and the tops of her breasts showed. I saw a white star, and I thought of Carson Cheese and then Maxine. I felt sick.

She was chuckling, now laughing. It wasn't nice to hear the way she did it. It ran up and down my spine like barn mice blades.

Then she did an amazing thing. She tore the housecoat open, baring herself.

"Take a good hard look, neighbor."



"Tell him to take an ostrich egg and the liver of a python mixed with elephant suffice, and call me in the morning."

She had firm breasts that stuck out like gun barrels, very pointed and erect. The nipples were larger than 50 cent pieces.

But despite this initial beauty, there were scars, bruises, discolourations. The scars looked as if rough fingers had sliced and sliced across the tender flesh.

I was seeing Carmen Chavis all over again that terrible morning in The Saug, her cotton blouse torn to shreds, and her golden braids ... I was a kid at the time and it had stuck with me all these years.

"Come on in. No one's home. Tuli and his wife are at the cottage."

mountain and back where he belongs."

She stood there waiting.

"I can't." I wanted to tell her how much I wanted to see him gone, but that wasn't what she wanted to hear.

"I say you can."

She pressed close again, knowing hand, unashamed and I remembered what it was like to hold a hot woman again. It had been a long time since Edie had shown such warmth and passion, before we were married.

"Why should I do anything to get Big Lot to go?"

She countered with a question of her own. "Why do you think he came back here?"

I felt angry and hated Lot. "Get to the point, Linda."

"He hurts everything he touches. It makes problems and trouble. I don't want trouble, not up here on the mountain. He can't always win."

She grabbed my fingers because she felt she had to pay something to get what she wanted. She wanted Lot off the mountain and she wanted that pretty badly.

"I agree, he can't always win," I said thickly.

"He's important, you know." She said it quite casually.

It was all so crazy, I was sitting on a bed next to a basket who'd made me hot for her, and I should have been looking for Big Lot before he hurt Mannie. But I stayed where I was.

"I don't know if I love him, but he makes a lot of money and I like money. It buys everything you want."

The subtle thing burning in her eyes was revealing.

"You hate him, don't you, Linda?" I said, pleased at my discovery.

"I ... hate ... him ...?"

She said it so slowly, emphasising each word. She lay back, hands reaching. So for a little while we forgot about Big Lot and his sadness. We were strangers, but friendly strangers, not really strangers at all. Our needs reached a plateau where there could be no turning back or compromise, not even a faint denial.

Later she lay in my arms, limp and relaxed, her body glistening with a sheen of perspiration. Then I washed everything, including sex, from my mind. Andre had said "Big Lot wouldn't die." I got off the bed quickly, leaving Linda with a startled look on her face.

I ran blindly from Tuli's house and worked my way up the mountain, along side tracks that I hadn't taken for 19 years.

If what Linda had said was right then, Big Lot was preoccupied with Carmen Chavis. But she was safe with Andre — Mannie wasn't.

I was panting a long time before I reached The Saug, bathed in the moonlight.

That's when I heard a woman scream. The same torture, the same pangs of agony. The same after desperation.

She stood there in the clearing, the moonlight shafting down on her, a very frightened child, frozen by something she could see. As I saw my heart pounded and a sob tore from inside of me to fall strangled at my own ears.

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The last woman of Normandy

THE LAST EVIDENCE of a 100-year-old Australian mystery is a lonely grave in the old cemetery at Cooktown in north Queensland. There is no name on the headstone, only the simple inscription, "Here lies the Normandy Woman".

The woman was first seen in 1888 by a young English prospector, Charles Jodrell, who was out riding near Normandy in search of wild horses. He found her living with a tribe of Aborigines in a remote and little-known area of the Cape York Peninsula.

Jodrell saw that through the woman was about like the rest of the tribe, she was only varnished and not dark-skinned. She had long hair and frightened looks in her eyes.

After Jodrell's report, a police party was sent out, and they succeeded in capturing the woman. She appeared to be about 30 years old, and had a fair and delicate skin than any other white woman in the district.

The woman did not understand any English words, and spoke only the local Aboriginal dialect. It was assumed that in an instant she had survived a dispersal of the camp nearby, and the natives had rescued her and raised her.

When the woman was placed in an institution in Cooktown she refused to eat, and died within four days. While she was there she kept crying and moaning in the Aboriginal tongue — probably calling for the other members of the tribe who had shown her kindness.

I shrugged. "His brother, Tuli. The annual songfest."

She led me deeper into the house, into an entirely bedroom with half unpeeled curtains. We sat on the ornate double bed, side by side. I felt her warm hip next to me.

"Big Lot talks to me." Her fingers worked on the buttons of my shirt. "So, he talks. Go on."

"He keeps saying the one word over and over. A name, Carmen Chavis ..."

"Who's Carmen Chavis?" I tried.

Her fingers moved to my face, caressing. "You're Ralph. Lot talked about a Ralph, the brother of Carmen Chavis. Can't be many Ralphs on the mountain. I say that's your name."

"Maybe I am." It was silly to make a game out of it.

"Lot hurt her, didn't he? Like he hurt me and a lot of others. That's Lot."

It was a crazy moment and I felt crazy inside, so I did as she said and I heard her close the door. I meant to ask her name and find out if she knew just where Lot had gone. But instead I found her against me and she was soft and warm, now pressing tight against me, her arms around my neck, pulling my face down.

"Why?" I managed.

Her terrible laugh again.

I looked into her eyes. Something burned there that shouldn't have.

She was kissing me. She knew how to kiss a man. Then she pulled back slightly.

"You can help me," she answered.

It didn't sound right or even make sense. "How the hell can I help you? Why should I? I don't even know your name."

"Linda. And you can help me."

"How?"

"Get Big Lot off the damn



THE BIGGEST THIEF IN THE WORLD

His shady dealing and trickery brought him a fantastic business empire — but when it was scrutinized, it burst like a bubble.

FACT / PAUL BROCK

INTO THE smoking room of the luxurious Atlantic liner strolled the man who for years had made a fine art of robbing bankers, swindling great bond-swelling houses, milking insurance and even bankrupting governments. With a mark of faint dust on his face he surveyed the glittering company, his deep-set eyes twinkling coldly from face to face.

This man was Ivar Kreuger, match-maker, multi-millionaire, colonial big-business robber-baron whose loot up to that date amounted to more than \$650 million, all amassed by working the oldest swindle in the capitalist system — that of robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Only in Kreuger's case, when Peter had little left of which to be robbed, all Kreuger had to do was return to his study and there forge notes for millions of dollars. Until his downfall, these notes were honored by the Finance Ministers of practically every nation in the Western World.

On the night, on board a modern Atlantic liner which he could have bought outright without even noticing the slight reduction in his bank balance, he was at the peak of his wealth and power. Only the sumptuous, the seductively beautiful, or the world-famous entered that lounge. And new all eyes, male and female, were turned towards Ivar Kreuger as, pretending to be unaware of their interest, he drew out a gold cigarette case.

"Has anyone a match?" asked the man who ruled the match-making potential of the entire world.

There was a ripple of laughter. "No!" chorused a dozen voices, "but we've all got lighters!"

A dozen flames were held out to him. He selected that offered by a tall, blonde American girl, the most desirable (and naturally the most

expensive) cigarette on the boat. Kreuger, whose factories had made a million matches during the month he had been on the road, snatched and placed his arm around her shoulders. She sought his hand and squeezed it — a manic prelude that would cost him \$10,000 that night.

Meanwhile the millionaire, the big businessman, the Hollywood stars all watched him with undisguised wonder and admiration. Every one of them wished he had the riches which Ivar Kreuger possessed. All the males present wished they could afford his partner, and all the females present called her sumptuous names under their breath and yearned to take her place.

Kreuger merely smiled. He could afford to smile. Many years were to pass before the truth about him was to be known.

It came at last in 1931, when Kreuger lay in his luxurious Paris apartment with a bullet in his head. And the truth was so incredible that for days the bankers, the financial experts, and even the little men of half a dozen countries who had followed their financial leader, refused to believe it. For this man had established a legend that his vast hoard of notes made him immortal. He was beyond the reach of death by the bullet. But only beyond the reach of a bullet fired by somebody else. Not all the money in the world, or all the men in it either, could stop the great Ivar Kreuger from pulling the trigger himself.

In Britain three of London's leading newspapers thought Kreuger's death worthy of a full "leader", usually reserved only for Presidents and royalty. They spoke of him as the king of the financial pyramids of our time. Two famous economists praised him publicly, and expressed the opinion that his wisdom had averted another World War.

Their faces must have turned a particularly vivid red when, as the weeks passed, investigation showed that Kreuger was not only an unscrupulous international financier of the worst type, but a thief, a forger, a homosexual and a rapist. Not only that, but — and this was quoted in all seriousness by a staid old London Newspaper — he used to surreptitiously rob the collection box when it was passed to him in church on Sundays.

For years everybody had hailed Kreuger as the greatest financial genius of all time. But when the chips were down they discovered that he was actually the biggest thief and forger who ever lived.

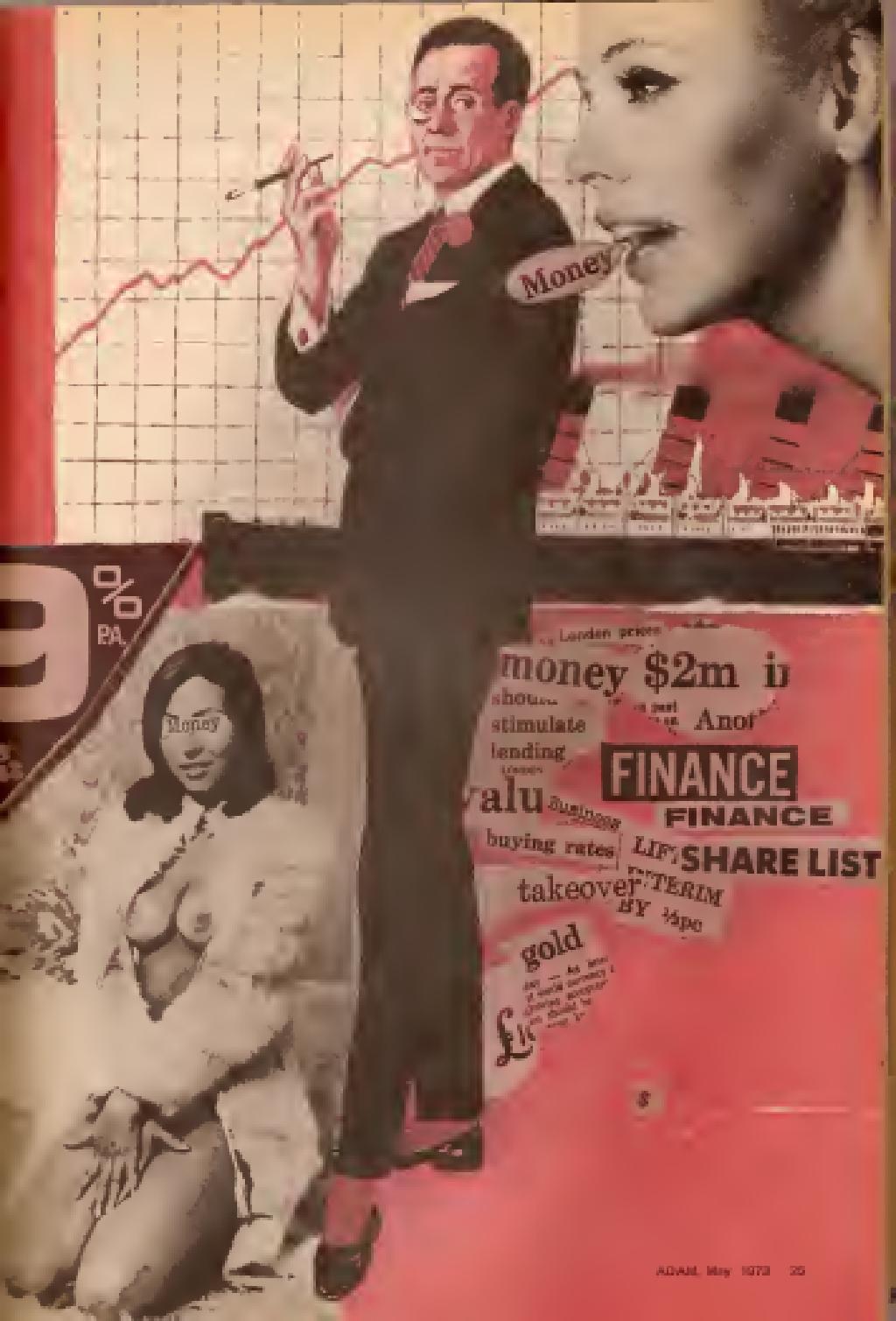
In one way or another Kreuger took \$650 million out of the small investors of the world, using the accepted international financial system to do it. The investors were chiefly in France, the United States and Germany, but even Kreuger's brother Sweden suffered to the tune of over \$10 million.

Kreuger was born into a family that had been in the match industry for two generations, but it was not until after he had worked as an engineer in the US and elsewhere, and built up a substantial building business in Sweden that he turned once again to matches.

"Let us concentrate on a product that everybody uses," he said, "and one which is certain to be used in vast quantities a hundred years from now, in spite of any scientific developments which may take place in the field. Is there such a product? Yes — it is the match, which never goes out of fashion."

He put forward the idea of reorganizing Sweden's match industry, with six many small factories, into one vast project.

(Continued on page 67)



STRIP FOR ACTION

Steve Connell thought they'd missed their only chance of survival
— until the German girl suddenly showed what she was made of.

FICTION / CARL ASCH

THE PLANE FELL like a shot-gunned paper.

Forced back into his seat by centrifugal force, Steve Connell was conscious of fleeting images. Binson, the French pilot, his arms writhing with muscle, his thin dark face staring as he fought the controls. The girl, Ingrid, Binson in her seat, her skirt flipped back to show slender provocative thigh, her full, sensuous mouth half parted, her eyes narrowed.

Now, for the first time since Steve had met her, there was no seductive intent, none of the come and get me seduction act she had been showing at him until he had boarded the plane in Athens.

Outside the cabin windows a nightmare landscape whirled about them. The Negev, the southern desert of Israel, bared its teeth as the crippled Cessna fell towards it. Steve braced his lean six-foot frame in a semi-crouched position apparently matched at a wing. Binson yelled either in fear or fury. The girl said nothing.

The plane flattened suddenly into a swooping glide. A range of low hills sloped under the wheels. A jagged monolithic rock apparently tried to catch through the windshield, hitting only at the last second.

Steve felt a series of hammer blows near his kidneys. The ground passed past his window, reached up and tore off one wing tip. Glass shattered and there was an awful crashing followed by a silence that was if anything louder.

They were down and slow.

Binson's hands blurred across the dash. The snowy harsh heat and the twisted door then threw himself after it. Over his shoulder he yelled: "Get Free!"

The girl was between Steve and the door. Locked in her own private dream of fear she showed no signs of

coming out of her catatonic daze. Without thinking about it, Steve scooped her in front of him as he jumped, landed outside the plane with her full body crushed in his arms.

He landed with both feet running and they kept running. When he was 50 yards from the plane the fuel tank gulped and threw a blast of fire after him as it exploded. Fragments of fuselage whirped in the air and spattered him in the sand around him.

At the foot of a shallow rise he stopped running, turned and glanced at the plane. The blue and white painted tail was the only part of the little Cessna 180 not engulfed by flames.

In those flames was the \$3000 toolkit necessary to Steve's work as a trouble-shooting master mechanician for a world-famous drilling company. He had taken years to build that toolkit, and half the value by now tools he had designed and made himself, no mechanician could replace them.

The squat set face was grim as he stared down at the wreckage.

The girl moved against his chest, recalling him to other realities. He glanced down to find her heavy-lidded green eyes open and staring him speculatively. As she met his gaze she moved and writhed fluidly in his arms, pressing her rounded breasts against his chest.

"Boring," she said "pomposely, "you're so strong."

"Argh," said Steve.

Unconsciously he dumped her into the rock strewn sand of the desert. Her disbelief and falling across her face, more skin riding up around her hips, almost transparent blouse torn in front, exposing deep cleavage and perfectly rounded breasts, she was a very Nathanial model indeed. But Steve was tired and in no mood for being fritched.

"What are you?" he asked, blis-

sing. "Some kind of sex-maniac? You tried to seduce me from Athens to Cyprus, Cyprus to Lydda you tried the pilot till you found out he was married and dead! Later on you tried me again till you found out I wasn't playing. Then you talked for a while. Now we've had a nice little plane crash to wake you up a little and you're courageous."

She pointed at him and ruffled slowly at her hip. Her voice was low, almost harshly pitched and her German-accented English gave it a cut-throat savor.

"You can't blame a girl for trying," she said. "You're an attractive man and I like Americans."

"I'm an Australian," Steve said unapologetically. "Honey, I love you too but, see, I am not a tourist and when we get to Rishon I am going out in the desert to play survivor to a rock drilling rig. Two, we are down in the god-awful heat and have a long walk ahead of us."

She was digesting this when Binson came cat-footing up the slope behind them. The Frenchman was still carrying the canvas satchel he had thrown out of the plane on crashing. Under his right arm was tucked the sturdy, efficient shape of an Uzi sub-machine gun. He approached in time to hear the end of Steve's outburst, and although he grabbed the gun was brief and did not touch his eyes.

"Even that is simpler than the true situation, Mr. Connell," he said. "To walk out is not a problem. There is a road about 30 kilometers West and I have enough water to last us two days with care. If we stay by the wreck we could be picked up soon sooner. I am still on the Lydda skywatch. And our military radar will have had no plotted."

"So there's nothing to worry about," said the girl. She began to brush sand away from her face alert, posturing prettily with one foot





"This is the shiny blade I used to go with."

smiled as she did so. Her green eyes watched Steve obliquely for his reaction.

"Oh, well, thought Steve, took-off gear, engagement shot. He could sit in that hot fox-wagon waiting for new instruments that would positively not be available on a drilling rig. From a previous trip some three years before he knew that Israel's Red Sea port had some of the best night clubs in the world. And he added, merrily, glancing at Israel, the hotels all had bedrooms. He smiled at her and Eisner.

"So let's sit and wait," he said. "I have nothing in the best."

Eisner stared at them both sombrely. His thin, dark face was grim.

"Why do you think we crashed?" he asked harshly. "Engines failed? That . . . was my guess. There are no mistakes in running my plane. If there is anything doubtful I do not take off. I am a civil pilot not a fighter pilot — I do not take risks."

"What are you trying to say?" Steve demanded.

"I am saying we were shot down." He nodded curtly as they both stared at him. "By a heavy machine gun I would judge. Probably a 12.7 mm. We are inside Israeli territory by 20 miles so it was not fired from over

the border. This leaves only one alternative."

"Fedayeen," Steve said slowly.

The Israeli nodded. "I see you know what Fedayeen are, Mr. Connell."

"Well, I don't," the girl broke in, suddenly shrill. "What are you talking about? What are Fedayeen

and what have they got to do with us?"

"They're terrorists," Steve told her. "Killers from the Arab countries into Israel. They come in to sabotage and kill. Or didn't you know there was a war?"

"Usually they are not so brave," Eisner said. "They do not penetrate very deeply and they do not move by day. I judge that these are infiltrators who have been intercepted, cut off from their compatriots and are being pursued by our army. They probably thought that we were looking for them and that is why they fired on us."

The girl's face turned slowly from one man to the other. For the first time her expression was not a deliberately adopted one and Steve thought with astonishment that she was in fact one of the cutest things he had ever seen — when she stopped trying to be cute.

"I don't understand," she said. "What have you got to do with me? I am a German citizen. Steve, you are Australian. Only Steve Eisner is in any danger if they should come here. And he could hide. We will say we were alone. It is very simple."

Eisner looked at Steve helplessly, then spread his hands and shrugged. From the corner behind he took out a pair of handcuffs and a holstered revolver. He spun the handcuffs round his neck and handed the gun to Steve.

"I hope you can use this," he said. "I also hope you can explain this young lady because I get up I am going to have a look round."

He went on up to the crest of the



"I thought we agreed on a small, quiet wedding!"

The start of Australian cricket

THE FIRST RECORDED game of cricket in Australia was played in Sydney in 1803 — 15 years after the story of the first settlers. It was already a widely-played sport in England.

In the next 50 years or so, the rules of cricket crystallised. The first representative match between Australian colonies took place in 1856, when a representative team from New South Wales played one from Victoria.

An earlier match, however, had been played in 1801 between a team from Van Diemen's Land — later Tasmania — and Port Phillip Settlement, but that match was played in February, and Port Phillip did not become the separate colony of Victoria until July, 1851.

The first English team to visit Australia arrived in 1854, and seven years later a team of Aboriginal cricketers — including such names as Twoogoom and Dada-Dick — played in England.

The first Sheffield Shield match was that of 1882-3, when Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia took part. The first Test Match between England and Australia was played in 1877 at Melbourne.

ridge with an easy loping stride, dropped flat at the crest and began to search the desert in slow methodical sweeps of the lances.

The revolver was an old British Webley .38. There were five rounds in the cylinder and six in loops on the carbine of the holder. Steve filled the empty chamber and put the five spare rounds in his pocket. The girl watched him incredulously.

"Do you seriously claim to use that?" she demanded. "In a war that has nothing to do with you? Are you crazy?"

Steve sighed. She was really a very pretty girl, he decided. She couldn't really be that dumb.

"Look," he said. "I've met these Indians boys before. They are not Indians. They are terrorists — *kulkas*. They favor women, children and old men as targets. They're night controllers and assassins. Sure this isn't our war but how do you expect to explain it to them? They're *Amis*. If you were lucky enough to find one who spoke English or German, if you were fortunate enough to get him to listen to you before shooting you, if you could convince him that you were not English or German-speaking *Amis* . . ."

"I have a German passport."

"Supposing he can read German — where is your passport?"

Ingrid's hands flew to her face and she stared past him at the unceasingly weak of the plane. Her eyes dilated and filled with terror.

"They would not shoot a woman," she said.

"Maybe not right away," Steve said. "You might wish they had."

He'd said too much. The green eyes glazed over with shock, the full mouth became loose and trembled. Her hands trembled and closed at her throat. Whispering babbling

sounds came from her lips. Even in disintegration she was pretty.

Steve caressed her hand across the face with the back of his right hand. A livid welt sprang up on her cheek and blood trickled slowly from the corner of her mouth. A small pink tongue came out to lick at it and the glazed terror left her eyes. Amazingly, she slanted a wry glance at him and smiled slowly.



"For \$425 I got 14 days in Europe, a car and a French brand named *Collette*."

"Woman," she said. "I love beautiful men."

Invictantly Steve laughed. His tone showed in the way that he laughed, half-throated, a little too long. Ingrid looked at him nervously and with an effort he stopped laughing. He reached out and put one arm around her smooth shoulders.

"You're a beauty, Ingrid. Just do as you're told and I'll treat you to the best hotel room in Elstir and the finest dinner in town."

"Double," she said.

"You're a big eater?"

"The room, too!"

Elmore came down the slope, running.

"They are coming," he said. "A Toyota command car with a heavy machine gun. Five, maybe six men. Does she understand?"

He looked at the sudden fear in the girl's face and nodded.

"Good. Now this is what we must do . . ."

* * *

Steve lay in the spart cover of the camel-thorn scrub and watched the command car gnawing up the slope towards him.

(Continued on page 81)



AUSTRALIA'S FIRST WAR FLYERS

While the ANZAC divisions were fighting on Gallipoli, four Australian pilots in outdated aircraft were fighting a pioneer air war in the Mesopotamian desert.

FACT / MICHAEL YOUNG

THE GENERAL STAFF of the Indian Army Expeditionary Force would have been hard put to choose a more unsuitable site for the airmen's airfield. It was located in the middle of a malaria-ridden swamp, at the end of a crude road of decomposed logs. The officers and men stationed there lived in tents, and shared their small area of mixed dry ground with an old Arab cemetery. In the middle of the day the temperature rose to more than 110 degrees.

But there was no time to complain about the scenery. The Australian pilot officers and ground crews spent their first few days at the field in assembling and testing their aircraft, getting ready for action.

Then, on May 31, 1915, as the early daylight hours before the blaring sun heated and vibrated the air, the first machine was wheeled

out ready for a patrol. The Renault engine popped and spluttered into life, and the little biplane — a thing of stretched fabric, braced struts and stiff tight wires — trundled out on to the runway, turned into the wind and staggered off the ground in a swirl of dust.

The handful of officers and men who watched from the side of the runway with their eyes narrowed against the dust and sunlight knew that they had just seen history made. They were mostly Australians belonging to the Mesopotamian Half Flight of the Australian Flying Corps, and the Mounties Farman Shorthorn which had just left the ground was about to make the first Australian operational flight of World War I — and the first in history.

Those were the years of first flights. It was less than 12 years since

the Wright brothers' biplane had first shaved its way into the air for man's first powered flight, less than four years since an Italian aircraft in North Africa made the first war flight by a powered machine. And the Australian Flying Corps itself had been in existence for less than three years.

The first suggestion for military aviation in Australia had come in 1909, when the Commonwealth offered a \$10,000 prize to the designer of a successful "flying machine for military purposes". About 40 inventors entered the competition, but not one was successful.

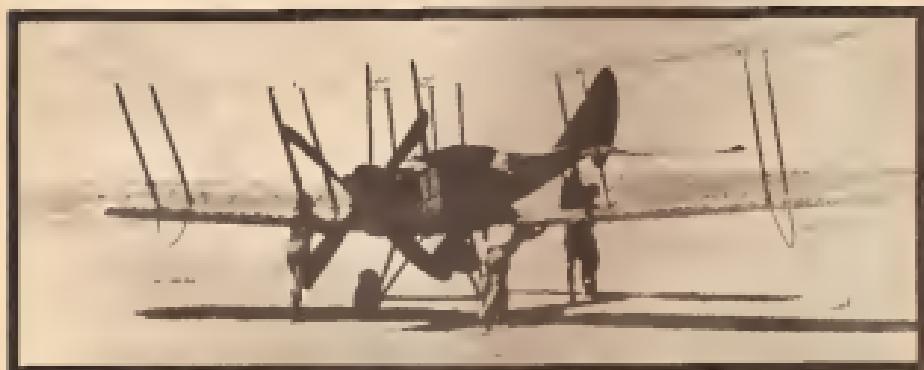
Nonetheless, in December, 1910, the Military Board reviewed a proposal for a flying corps to support the army, and two years later a site for a flying school was chosen, aircraft were bought overseas, and



LEFT
One of the Half Flight's Maurice Farman Shorthorn being towed into the wind for a take-off.

ABOVE
In Mesopotamia, another was a dangerous business even on the ground. These three Shorthorns were damaged when the Shatnai dragged them from their moorings

BELLOW
Re-supply from the air, 1916 style. The BE2c is loaded with grain for the besieged Kut garrison. Some of the bags can be seen hanging under the fuselage behind the wheel.



pilots and mechanics were taken on strength. On September 20, 1912, the new corps came into existence.

Six weeks before that, a civilian pilot, Mr H. A. Petre, became Australia's first military aviator when he was posted to the Aviation Instruction Staff as an honorary lieutenant. Ten days later Mr B. A. Harman was engaged as the school's second instructor with the same rank. And general recruitment for the new corps began on January 1, 1913.

The first pilots to be trained at the Central Flying School, Point Cook, were the first ones to be called

The four pilots of the Australian Flying Corps' Half Flight. (Left to right) Petre, White, Harman and Merv. In front, an Arab servant.



for active service when World War I began less than two years later. An expeditionary force was sent from Australia in August, 1914, to seize German New Guinea, and Lieutenant Harrison was sent to fly an reconnaissance with Lieutenant G. P. Miers as his second pilot.

The other pilots saved Harrison and Miers when they left, but there was little fighting in New Guinea and their aircraft were not even taken out of their crates. Then, soon after they returned in disappointment to Australia, a second chance for action appeared.

This time it was a request from further afield. The Government of

the ground crews were issued with their first uniforms. Two days later — five days before the Anzacs sighted shores at Gallipoli — they sailed for the Persian Gulf.

In May, 1915, the Australian flyers had their first glimpse of the tall date-palms and squat white buildings of Mesopotamia shimmering in the desert heat. Doyed with spume, they landed in this "Arabian Nights" setting to take charge of their aircraft.

So far, the Mesopotamian campaign had gone well for the Indian Army. A quick attack at the outset had led to the capture of the town of Basra, securing the Anglo-Persian Oil

expertly chosen. The Farns were quite unsuitable for any sort of active war service, let alone a war far from home in the baking heat of Mesopotamia. They were not fitted to carry gas or bombs, and in that climate their already feeble performances fell off even more.

But they were all that were available, and Captain Petre knew he would have to make the best of them. Petre was an quiet, intelligent Englishman who had been a barrister to London before emigrating to Melbourne. He had learned to fly at Brooklands, one of the centres of aviation in Britain, and in Australia he had shown himself to be a thorough and efficient officer. Now, on active service for the first time, his qualities were to be exercised to the full.

Within five days of landing, the Australians had all three Farns cleaned, overhauled and rigged, and Petre made a short test flight in each. Then, on the morning of May 11, General Townshend's advance up the flooded Tigris began — and Petre, with a New Zealand officer, Lieutenant W. W. A. Ross, as his observer, took off on the APC's first mission.

In the days of battle which followed, Petre and his pilots and observers proved that even the slow and clumsy Farns were capable of bringing back valuable intelligence. On the first day Petre and Ross spotted new Turkish defences in front of the Indian troops moving up in small boats from hill to hill along the flooded river valley. And on the second day Captain White, acting as observer for Major H. L. Reilly, an Indian Army pilot, did even better.

White and Reilly took off from Basra in a Shorthorn fitted with dual controls, and struggled through the fierce northerly "shamel" wind to the battle area. After taking two hours to cover about 60 miles they reached the town of Safwan, where they saw that the Turks were already in retreat. Miles of the defences along the river were deserted and vulnerable.

The airmen dropped three small bombs on the Turks, swooping low through an ill-aimed fusillade of rifle-fire. One bomb narrowly missed a bunch full of fleeing soldiers, who promptly ran their bows ashore and surrendered. By then the Shorthorn, with the wind behind it, was flattening back south along the river.

Shortly afterwards the crew of the little biplane H.M.S. Comet were surprised to see the biplane materialise and come in low overhead and on a bombing run.

(Continued on page 68)

Tramps on the odd emphyllies

MODERN CAMEL herders in Queensland have fine horses and camels — but there was a time not too long ago when they had neither. Born, raised, hardly had respectable roads to their herds.

In those days, when the camels were being cast, you would see the owners of such blocks of camels riding to town in the little black iron-trimmed traps hauling loads of camels to the mill.

These traps went up the line in the early morning, delivering empty traps for the camels to load. Towards noon the herds-men collected the filled traps and made for town, with the herds riding with them on "the signal".

On their arrival in town, the men had about two hours of shopping time before "the traps" were sent again with new supplies.

If the traps and camels caused discomfort, they never mentioned it.

India had launched a campaign in Turkish-occupied Mesopotamia at the end of the Persian Gulf, aimed at capturing Baghdad and protecting the region's valuable oilfields. They, too, needed planes for communications and reconnaissance.

The Indian Army had no aircraft of its own. Its staff asked Britain for an aeroport, but all the Royal Flying Corps' resources were committed to the war battles in France. However, the Maharajah of Gwalior generously provided the money to buy two modern aircraft, and the Australian Government called that it would provide pilots and mechanics to operate them.

Petre, now a captain, was placed in command of this modest unit, designated a "half flight". He had Lieutenant Miers, Captain T. W. White, and Lieutenant W. H. Trollope as pilots, and about 40 mechanics and other ground staff — some of whom had been very hastily recruited. A few had never even seen an aeroplane, let alone operated one.

Australia sent the promise of aid in February, 1915, and the men of the Half Flight were ready to leave two months later. On April 14, most

Company's vital pipelines and the Royal Navy's future oil fuel supplies. Now the commander in the field, Major-General C. V. F. Townshend, was getting ready to advance inland up the Tigris and Euphrates rivers against the Turkish Army.

The APC Half Flight landed just in time to take part in this operation. They found that a small airfield had already been made in the swamps by the Arab graveyard, and a small party of Indian Army officers and mechanics were waiting for them. They were equipped with two repurposed lorries, with horses and mules for reserve transport. All the men were factory.

When Captain Petre inspected the aircraft which had been supplied for his little force, however, he was not so satisfied. There were three — two Maurice Farman Shorthorns, primitive two-seater pusher-engined biplanes which were really fit only for training, and an even older and less aerobatically Maurice Farman Longhorn which had already seen considerable service in Egypt.

It was a pity the "modern machines" paid for by the benevolent Maharajah had not been more





1917

Ward

THE UNSAFE SAFE

The safe was empty until the diamonds were locked inside. When it was opened again, it was empty again. How?

FICTION / PETER SINCLAIR

"I HAVE NO INTENTION of spending one cent of my master pension for the benefit of a lazy and incompetent police force. If you and Inspector O'Hearn wish to pick my brains once more the least you can do is to provide the necessary transport, seeing you seem to think it so desirable that I should attend at the scene of the crime because somebody-or-other is confined to a wheelchair."

Hodgkiss was irritable. He stood for a moment, listening, the receiver pressed to his ear. Behind him his daughter, Bessie Burke, eavesdropped constantly.

"All right, Donald. I'll be ready to leave in five minutes," Hodgkiss said and put the receiver down.

"Darned impertinence," he said. "Wanted me to catch a taxi over Donald's impatience, that's what it is. Wanted me to spend my own money to help them solve one of their padding crimes. And why ever I have to travel right across town and actually interview the people involved."

"I'm sure Donald wouldn't ask if he didn't think it was absolutely necessary," said Bessie.

"Why would it be necessary? It's probably some perfectly trifling matter. He mentioned something about valuing his coins from a safe. If our police force is not adequate to deal with petty brawlers, really?"

"Now sit down, father, and have a cup of tea."

"It'll have to be quick. They've sent a police car for me and it will be here any moment."

Hodgkiss had just put down his empty cup when the car's horn sounded outside.

"Mornin'" he exploded. "They just sit out the front and blow the horn. At least they could come to the door!"

"Now, father, I think it's very nice of them to send the car over at all."

"It was either that or I wasn't going."

"Please, father, this time do you think you could work things out so that Donald might be given a bit of the credit? I'm sure it would mean a lot to him. I think he's been getting rather demoralized lately, what with you helping all the time."

"I offer advice only when it's sought," Hodgkiss said, a little put out.

"Oh, I know that, dad. I'm sure Donald really appreciates the help you've given him, but it would be nice if just this once you sort of... well, prod him in the right direction. You know what I mean."

"I know what you mean, dear," Hodgkiss said, softening.

The car horn sounded a long blast.

"Darned impertinence," he roared as he slammed the front door behind him.

Inspector O'Hearn made the introductions. "This is Mr Hodgkiss, whom I mentioned to you earlier. Mr Hodgkiss, this is Mr Curtis. Mr Curtis seems to have been robbed of a diamond necklace."

"Seems to have been robbed? What do you mean 'seems'?" de-

sclared Hodgkiss. "Well, Curtis, have you been robbed or haven't you?"

"Of course I've been robbed," said Curtis, wheeling his chair forward across Detective Constable Donald Burke's foot. He held his breath and said nothing.

Curtis went on. "The necklace vanished from the safe I saw it put in there a week ago and locked the safe myself. I opened it this morning and the necklace was gone. Of course I've been robbed. The Inspector and this person" — a bony finger thrust towards Donald — "seem to think the necklace is merely stolen."

"Perhaps you'd better tell Mr Hodgkiss exactly what happened, just as you told it to Constable Burke and myself," the Inspector said.

"Now, I've already explained to you that Mr Hodgkiss is not a policeman, but an unofficial adviser..."

"Honorary unofficial adviser," put in Hodgkiss.

"Who has offered us useful advice on occasions in the past?" the Inspector continued. "Of course it is quite possible that he may not be able to help at all on this occasion."

"Quite possible," said Donald.

"If Mr Curtis could be allowed to get on with his story, we might all find out soon enough who was going to be of any help," said Hodgkiss.

Curtis began. "About two months ago a wealthy man died in the United States and left me a diamond necklace. It was a very good necklace and when it was delivered — you can see that I'm in no condition to travel about much — I immediately called in a representative of a very respect-

ADJUSTMENTS



LAWRENCE

"What's wrong with them may I ask?"

old house of jewelry and asked for a valuation for insurance purposes. The man placed a valuation of \$50,000 on the necklace and I insured it for that amount.

"The insurance company said I would have to keep it in a bank vault or a private safe if they were to accept the risk. Well, I'm one of those people who believe that beautiful things — and this necklace is beautiful — should not be hidden away in a bank vault and never used. I told them I would have a private safe installed in the house, which I did. I wrote away to a safe manufacturing company for information about their products and a dozen times I had the safe fitted in the lounge room wall — as you see."

Curtis indicated the safe in door stood half open, showing a completely empty interior. "Until the safe was installed I kept the necklace in a bank vault or the insurance cover would not have been effective. As soon as the safe was installed I transferred the necklace into it. I'm a widower — my wife was killed three years ago in the same accident that left me the way I am — and I have a 20-year-old daughter who enjoys wearing the necklace to suitable functions. She's been overseas for the past month and as the necklace hasn't been much in use lately, however, I have taken it out of the safe each Sunday since she sailed, just to look at it."

"Pardon me interrupting, Mr.

Curtis," said Hodgkin, "but when you say 'I have taken it out of the safe,' you do not mean that you removed it permanently from the safe. From where you are sitting it seems to me that the safe would be too high for you to reach inside it without some difficulty."

"Quite so, Mr. Hodgkin," said Curtis. "When I say 'I took it out of the safe' I mean that my man, Manners, took it out for me."



"You'd never catch me going to any of those wife-snapping parties — I'd probably have to give odds."

"Manners, I take it, is a butler?"
"Not so much a butler as a general helper. You see, a man in my condition . . ."

"Of course. I see that you would be in need of physical assistance from time to time," said Hodgkin. "Please proceed with the story."

"Last Sunday I — or rather Manners — put the diamonds in the safe as usual and this morning, when the safe was opened, they had gone. That's all there is to it."

"You will have to provide more information than that if anyone is going to be of assistance to you," said Hodgkin.

"But that's all. That's the whole story," Curtis insisted.

"Details, Mr. Curtis, details. Did you keep the necklace in a box?" Hodgkin asked.

"Yes. In a metal strong-box. I had the only key."

"And how big was the strong-box?"

"Really, I'm sure Manners could answer that sort of question much better than I."

"I don't want to hear from Manners at the moment," said Hodgkin. "I want to hear your impression of it. How big was the box?"

"Well, it was about six inches long, two inches wide and about one inch deep."

"Good. Now, when you handed the box to Manners last Sunday . . ."

"Wait a moment," Curtis interjected. "You and your wanted details and details you shall have. I did not hand the box to Manners directly, I

Para grass — a benefit and a menace

EVERY GARDENER knows that common couch grass is very tenacious of life, but a much larger member of the same family grows along creeks and rivers in eastern Australia.

Para grass, as it is called, is not native to Australia. It was introduced from South America as a good cattle forage grass, as Australia was looking for good ruminant grasses.

The runners of the giant couch grass grow up to 100 yards long, when stretching out over deep pools and throwing up shoots about five feet high.

However, farmers try to prevent the couch growing into streams and down an embankment bank have been known to get hopelessly tangled in the tough stems and drown when they become submerged.

placed it on a tray he was carrying."

"Why the tray?" Hodgkins asked.

"It was just something he had made. He's quite a handy-man. It had become a joke between the two of us, this little ceremony of taking the diamonds out each Sunday and putting them away again. It was a small tray made from a left-over piece of stainless steel he found. He made two trays, as a matter of fact. I think he uses the other one on the kitchen."

"This tray that he used to carry the diamond box — was it deep enough to contain a secret compartment or anything like that?" Burke asked.

Hodgkins shuddered.

"No, Constable Burke," Curtis said firmly. "It was made from a thin piece of steel about one-eighth of an inch thick."

"Oh," said Donald Burke.

"Now, Mr Curtis, you placed the diamond box on the tray," said Hodgkins. "That was last Sunday. Was that the first time the tray had been used?"

"Yes, because Mansons made it during the previous week."

"Then he carried the tray to the safe?"

"Yes," said Curtis. "He placed the tray with the box on it into the safe — making a production of throwing how exactly it fitted — took the box off the tray, took out the tray and put the box down on the bottom of the safe."

"Forgive me interrupting again," said Hodgkins, "but I doubt very much if you could have seen in such detail everything that happened inside the safe. The safe is at least five feet six inches from the floor and you sit only about three feet six from the floor, so to see into the safe you would have had to be quite some distance away — say 10 feet or more."

"After I placed the box on the tray I wheeled myself across the

box off the tray, lifted the tray up, drew it back out of the safe, and put down the box inside the safe. Then with a kind of pushing motion he moved the tray to the back of the safe."

"One thing I'm quite certain of and that is that the box went into the safe on that tray. When the tray came out there was no box on it, nor was there any box in his hands when they came out. There's no doubt about it — he put the box away. I then closed the safe, reached up and looked at and set the burglar alarm."

"Mansons knew about the burglar alarm?" Hodgkins asked.

"Yes, but he had no way of turning it off except with a key which has been in my possession all week. I turned it off immediately before I opened the safe this morning and the man who fitted the alarm has inspected it since. He was quite adamant that the alarm has not been interfered with in any way. Yet when



"I hate to be a wet blanket, but there's been another shipwreck."

Manners opened the safe this morning and the diamonds were gone."

"Surely it's possible," Manners passed the key to the alarm and to the safe?" Hodgkins said.

"I suppose nothing is impossible," said Curtis, "but I really don't see how he could have. By day and night both keys are on a chain around my neck. I'm a very light sleeper and I lock my bedroom door each night."

"I think we can rule that out, then," said Hodgkins.

"You can rule it out if you want," said the Inspector. "So far as I can see, duplicates must have been used to steal the diamonds. Anyway, that's my theory. Once you rule out the use of duplicates keys you're left with an impossible situation where the diamonds are placed in the safe, the safe is locked and next time it is opened, although it has not been tampered with in any way, the diamonds are gone."

Hodgkins brushed the subject aside. "I would like to see the way Manners made for carrying the diamond box, and also the tray he made for use in the kitchen."

"Certainly," said Curtis. "The tray he used to carry the box is there on the mantelpiece and the extra tray is usually kept on top of the Refugee Committee, if you would be kind as to fetch it?"

Barks went to the kitchen and returned holding a small steel tray. Hodgkins examined both trays and made quick sketches of them, noting the measurements.

"These are extremely interesting," Hodgkins said.

"They look pretty ordinary to me," said Inspector O'Hara.

"They are certainly of rather plain design - very plain indeed. What is interesting about them is their



"This is Ellen and me when I was two years older than her; this is Ellen and me five years later when I was four years older than her; this is Ellen and me . . ."

dimensions. See how the one with the overlapping lip fits neatly into the other. That's not coincidence. There's some very fine workmanship involved in that." He turned to Curtis. "Manners opened the safe this morning - right?"

"Yes. There's only the two of us living here at present."

"When he ate the diamond box wasn't there who did he say?"

"He just said - 'My God, it's gone!'"

"And you said -?"

"I said 'Norcross, it can't be gone. You put it away yourself last Sunday!' And he said, 'Well, here's a

look for yourself', and took me under the arms and lifted me up out of the chair until I could see into the safe. The safe was completely empty."

"Was that the first time you have ever seen right into the safe?" Hodgkins asked.

"Yes. I'd never seen right to the back before."

"And when Manners put you down what did you do next?"

"I went straight to the telephone and rang the police."

Hodgkins looked around the room. "The telephone isn't in here. Where is it?"

"It's in the hall."

"And how long were you on the telephone?"

"Only a couple of minutes. I came straight back in here."

"And where was Manners while you were ringing up?"

"He was in bed," said Curtis. "I told him to stay here while I was gone. I thought it would be best if someone was here all the time until the police came."

Hodgkins hesitated. "Is Manners handy?"

"Yes. Do you want to speak to him?"

"No. I want to search his room." Curtis was horrified. "Really, Mr. Hodgkins, I cannot permit that."

"Then so far as I'm concerned the investigation is closed," said Hodgkins, getting to his feet.

That strange bird the pelican

POSSIBLY THE MOST unloved of Australia's large birds is the big white pelican, which has done most of the Australia coastlines, up the big inland rivers and on the lakes. It is also found in Indonesia and New Guinea, and occasionally in New Zealand.

Pelicans usually live in small flocks along the shoreline, especially near mud-flats and mud-flats. Their grey and white plumage and long, pointed, yellow bills make them very distinctive.

Pelicans are seldom seen in the air, although in spite of their rather clumsy appearance they are very good flyers. They are most often found flying in shallow water, or at rest on the edge of the land.

Their diet consists mainly of salt water and freshwater fish, and they are fine fishers on the wing. The pouch on a pelican's bill enables it to store food without swallowing it while it dives for many, and in this way it can make successive dives on the same school of fish.

Pelicans build their nests in clump-packed colonies, among a shallow lake in the ground and surrounding it with dead plants, grass and sticks. The female lays two or three large, yellowish-white eggs each breeding season.

"But surely you don't think Manners..."

"Mr. Curtis," said Hodges impatiently, "if your Mr. Manners didn't steal the diamonds then they are not stolen — which they obviously are."

"Very well," said Curtis, "if you feel it is necessary to search Manners' room you may do so, but if he gives notice I shall be most displeased."

"I shouldn't be at all surprised if he does give notice. No doubt he is looking for some reasonable excuse to leave without arousing suspicion."

"Really, this is most unfair," Curtis said. "I think you should at least talk to the man first."

"It's not necessary, believe me," said Hodges. "Burke, would you accompany me while I search Manners' room?"

Burke and Hodges were back within five minutes.

"Well, did you find anything?" asked the Inspector.

"We didn't find the diamonds," said Burke, "but we found all the evidence we need to put Manners behind bars. It wasn't done with keys after all, Inspector. It was done with trays."

"Trays?" harked Curtis.

"Trays," Burke insisted. He picked up a small book from Curtis' desk. "I'll show you exactly how it was done. Imagine this book is the diamond strong box. First of all I put one tray inside the other, thus, with the lipped tray on which the diamond box was placed inside the



"You selected you for this job, Director, because I happened to push the wrong button."

one used in the kitchen. They fit together so perfectly and the lip disengages the side of the second tray so well if you were not told there were two trays you would certainly think there was only one.

"Now, put the book on the tray. That's right. Now I carry the tray

with the book on it over to the safe. You follow me. Now give me the key to open the safe — but since it's already open we can dispense with that, because it wasn't important so far as the actual theft was concerned.

"Now, I place the tray — or as we now know, the trays — into the safe, the raised sides of the lower tray to the sides of the safe. See how perfectly it fits — so perfectly that I have to tip the trays a slight angle to fit them in. A really beautiful job, but then it had to be *Now*, Mr. Curtis, from where you are sitting, and judging from the movements of my arms, tell me what I am doing inside the safe."

Curtis watched carefully. "Now you are putting the tray down on the bottom of the safe."

"That's right," said Donald.

"Now you're lifting the book off the tray. Out comes the tray with nothing on it and now you're putting the book down and pushing it to the back of the safe."

"Quite right in almost every detail," said Donald. "You saw the book go on the tray. You saw the tray come out minus the book and you saw my hands come out holding only the tray. So the book must be still in the safe. Right?"

"Right," said Curtis.

"Wrong," said Burke. "The book is not there. Would you like to take a look?"

(Continued on page 80)



"Say, this isn't room 307."

ASHES OF VENGEANCE

Kimbers' cabin had been burned down while the sheriff had him in the jail, and his young wife was missing. Kimbers was going to make the sheriff pay . . .

FICTION / WADE B. RUBOTTOM



NUMBED BY TRAGEDY and night cold, Gil Chambers was returning to Sanddown. With his son's life down the steep trail, his 24-year-old frame swayed like a wind-wrecked tree in slow motion.

As soon as he'd got out of jail, he had headed for his Lost Canyon Ranch. The seat on the back and right side of his scalp stung, always ached when he thought of Joe Durstian. And fear of what Durstian would do to John burned his bone.

At sight of the red glow in the sky, fear almost choked him. Before he arrived, the glow had died. When he arrived, the smouldering black mass of the ranch house stung him. Fists unclenched with a snarl, he vowed that his wife John had meant to die.

Grief at the sense of all he loved didn't replace any of his hatred of Joe Durstian. There was no forgiving his vicious crime, or the sheriff's giving him time to commit it.

Vengeance sprung Gil back into

his saddle. Under a lowering harvest moon, he headed for Sanddown with a pained-gorged heart and a honest desire to kill Sheriff Ev Marshall.

Gil could feel John's face-blackeden'd damage on his leather pocket riding against his side. It was another galling reminder.

When he had given John that damage, his brown eyes went wide: "Gil, I don't need that. I wouldn't use it if I did."

"John, listen to me. Just keep it handy whenever I'm away."

She nodded sadly. "Killing, even in self-defense, is at best a human weakness. The instinct—"

"Use it as human strength."

She hurried his advice. "The instinct to survive is an animal trait. And revenge is a pact with the Devil."

Gil pulled her slim form to him. The top of her honey blonde hair was as higher than his short pocket. Finally he got her to promise never to be without it when he was away.

And tonight, he had found it among the ruins of their home, near the unshouldered trunk of the fallen pine tree that had tumbled over it. And on hoof-soft earth, soft from the fire, he found the gold chain and locket that he had never seen his wife without. The chain's broken clasp was a galling reminder of Joe Durstian's lust for gold — and evidence of his other lust.

He adjusted the ends of his low-crowned Stetson on his red hair and rubbed the lids of his green eyes. One trip across Ridge Trail was enough to ask of any horse, but he had mountain-gated Quivira across twice tonight. She must be stone-cast and brusied. This was a trail in name only, but it was the shortest route between Sanddown and Lost Canyon Ranch.

Now at the main road, Gil raised Quivira to a walk, let her stretch her neck. He freed dirrigues, Muffins from his own shoulders and flexed his wrist and finger joints. One-



crushed and cold, he felt lightheaded, drunk. He was in no condition to face the sheriff of Sandtown.

Again he repeated his vow, made at the surrounding black ranks of all he loved. "I'll never rest until I see Joe Durston dead. But the sheriff goes first."

He spurred Quivira to jog astounds cold from them both and to cover the remaining miles and a half.

Only Gil Kimball's deep need for revenge kept him from breaking down with misery. He and Julie had been happy. Two years ago, seven months after his father's death, he had earned the new schoolmarm from Schenck's Academy over the threshold of his father's one-room shack at Lost Canyon Ranch.

They'd made plans and set about them. They built, painted, wallpapered and furnished by last Spring they had converted the one-room shack to a fine four-room ranch house.

He could never go back there. Not even to thoroughly search the black room for his wife's remains.

Bugles, he had no time for that. Hatred for Joe Durston flared in his heart. Yet in a way, he himself was to blame. If he had listened to Julie, this might not have happened.

For four years he had banked the fire of his hatred for Durston. It was the reason of their prospering partnership. Gil had been 20 at the



"He's right, Serge. There's nothing in the book about picking trees."

time. For two and a half years, Julie had tried to help him forget revenge.

He knew now there was only one way to avenge revenge from his heart — study it. This time there'd be no forgetting. This time, he wouldn't have Julie's help. She had told him that revenge is bitter and wicked. But

Julie didn't know — school teachers don't know everything. She'd never known that revenge is sweet. He scratched his nose.

She had almost made him forget Joe Durston. Then yesterday afternoon he'd seen Durston's dog, Wolf. Fundamentally, master and dog were alike. Each was quick tempered and quick to show it. But each showed it in his own way.

Hot-tempered Joe Durston was soft spoken and always cool when a fight got serious. Wolf exposed his temper with low snarl and a flash of teeth. The sight of him asleep, near the Poco O'Gold Saloon's hitching rail, had sent Gil mad.

The sight of Joe Durston at the bar with his head tilted back and a whisky glass to his lips revealed Gil'sache for revenge. Joe had prospered since Gil had last seen him. He was dressed up from black embossed boots to white Shetland. A monocle-garnished ID on his shirt pocket and yellow neckerchief hinted at self-confidence. From Gil's point of view there was something wrong with his outfit. He didn't take time to puzzle it out.

With the last wing down still flapping behind him, Gil called, "Joe Durston!"

Joe set his whisky glass down. His powdered hair tickled from his ears bowed at his sides, his hands gun-ready. The pale hazel eyes in his whisky-faced face showed no recognition. Then he relaxed and pushed back his hat.

"I'm not armed, boy." His voice



"We were parked in a lonely lane and I had to stop four times. He kept driving off!"

up low, soothng — as if to a child. "You can see for yourself."

That's what was wrong with his outfit. His gunbelt was missing.

"I see," Gil said, aware of men shuffling out of range, "but did it matter to you that I wasn't armed?" Gil hated himself for not being cool as Durstian, for the increased pounding of his heart — the day you used a shovel on any head?"

"That was an accident," Joe said easily. "The shovel fell on you."

"It was an accident that you didn't kill me."

"Glad that I didn't, boy," Joe chuckled dryly. "It gave me something to look forward to."

Gil took a deep breath. Suddenly half of him wanted to hack through the brawling dozen — forget this, as John so often had asked him to. But the other half of him wanted to see Joe Durstian die — as soon as he was armed. He didn't have time to resolve his two wants.

He felt the gun barrel against his back. He recognised the voice. Slowly, he obeyed the command — his hands went over his head. Slowly, he turned around and looked into the stern face behind the longhorn mustache. He saw the broad chest providing ample space for the silver sheriff's star.

"Kluxers!" There was nothing newabout about the sheriff or his voice, but his words were less and less to the point. "In Sundown, you check your guns with me." When he had Gil's gunbelt, holster and 45 colts in his left hand, he added, "You'll cool in jail while Durstian gets out of Sundown."

* * *

The sheriff had had no time to jail Gil that afternoon. Because he had, his time was running out. Now in a few minutes he would die.

At the edge of town, Gil reached Quivira to a walk. Horse and rider passed the dark Livery Stable, by Marshall, Prop., and then hoofbeats rang on the cold-hard floor of a canyon of dark trees from Pecos



"I give you one more, Eddie — my 'bells' to the guys at the boarding stage, mifral!"

through light from the Poco O'Gold's bright windows, Gil's charred hands reminded him.

He urged Quivira past the dimly lit lobby of The Marshall House, still owned by Ev Marshall. Passed the white bellied church — in contrast due to Marshall's generous donation and his tireless efforts in raising the required holmes.

"If a town ever belonged to one man," Gil thought grimly, "Sundown belongs to Ev Marshall."

One day, six years ago, his horse — more dead than alive from hard riding — stumbled into Sundown. It

itself — more dead than alive from a gunshot wound — and his name was Eddie.

Real peaceful-like he was — for six months. Then Art Hegarty and his boys came to town. They came with the strike at Head Rock, 40 miles West. It was then that Sundown learned that Eddie's real name was Ev Marshall — better known as Ev Marshall, gunfighter. The whole town knew by the way he rid Sundown of Hegarty's gang and named himself for Boothill.

Soon after, Ev Marshall won the Poco O'Gold in a poker game and sold it to a gunfighter who drifted in a week later. It was then he built The Marshall House. It was mainly Ev Marshall who'd pushed Sundown, an old overnight station on the Butterfield Stage Line, into a prosperous cattle and mining town. And it was he who'd got Sundown a working sheriff.

Gil admired Marshall for changing from a gunman to a respected citizen. He literally was a self-made man, and certainly...

Gil joined up Quivira before the long lighted doorway. What trouble

Palms made poor rafters

THE HUMPIES of early settlers in California were rough and ready structures of native timber.

Rafters were a problem, but the old hands thought they saw a solution in the beautiful creosote palms found throughout the state.

The tall, slender trees were tall and split, giving long raft supports.

But they were not durable, as the fibers quickly dried and shrunk so that roofs would not hold in them.

The roof timbers were soon wracked off when cyclones missed hit the coast, and after that "palms" was out in other material.

was afoot, and generally when it wasn't, the light never went out in the sheriff's office.

He swung down and took Quarrie to the hutching end. He tugged the cylinder of his shotgun out for inspection and closed it back again. He adjusted his tied down holster.

He was tired weary and cold. His wrist and finger joints were stiff. He was in no condition to gun down the sheriff. But he was determined to do it now and get on with tracking down Joe Durstian — already several hours away.

A strong combination of exhaustion and dread gripped him. His aching jaw stretched the wind-curved, freckled skin of his face. His scalp-scar itched.

He pushed his face form up

"Thought you'd change your mind, Kimber." Marshall's voice was deep and kindly.

In a slow continuous motion, he fastened off the drawer and he had his book, open and back up, alongside his 45 on the table. Right of that book bothered Gil.

Marshall was a heavy framed man, horse-sold and strong. He was in scale with his longhorn mustache. Since his showdown with Hogerty, he had become a deeply religious man seeking atonement. "You did change your mind?"

"I—" Gil's voice was emotion heavy. "I'm gonna tell you." He closed the door and leaned heavily against it. He breathed heavily, yet he was ready to spring into action. His long arms hung loose at

spand on the table and the 45 alongside the book. "When you paid me yesterday afternoon and turned Durstian loose, he went after her — just as I told you he would."

"But he started south," Marshall said emphatically. "I saw to that."

"Did you see to it that he circled back to my ranch?" He—" Gil tried to realize the anger that was choking him. He couldn't say what he knew Durstian had done to Julie — then he fired my horse. He did all that while you held me to jail."

"I thought he was just another drifter bringin' up a strike I gave him a chance to move on." He paused thoughtfully eying Gil. "You couldn't have gone 12 miles to your ranch and back since I turned you loose."

Gil wriggled out his charcoal blackened hands. "How do you think I got this? It isn't 12 miles over Ridge Trail."

"Ridge Trail — at night? That's sheer suicide — especially with moon-cast shadows. You're drunk."

"No," Gil and evenly. "But I'm going to be drunk — soon as I kill you and track down Joe Durstian."

Marshall nodded slowly. "No man without foll in his heart could cross Ridge Trail twice in one night."

"It was for Julie's safety that took me across the first time. But it was kill in my heart that brought me back."

"Kimber, I haven't permitted you to go near Durstian since —"

"You declared yourself sheriff. Well, I'm changing that. Tomorrow, we'll elect a new sheriff."

"Stop the threat," Marshall barked. "Tell me what's behind that — or is that too much to ask?"

"Not too much — just more than you deserve." Hea, from the stove was sucking chaff from Gil's blouse, making him drowsy.

After he'd told what he'd found at his Lost Canyon Ranch, Marshall demanded, his eyes narrowing, "Why would Durstian do that?"

"He's out to spoil everything for me. He—"

"Go," Marshall protested impatiently, "you got Durstian all wrong. Yesterday morning, like I told you, he stopped in here, inquired about you — friendly as you please. Said you and he prospected together five years ago. Wanted to look you up — talk over old times."

"Sue! You reallocated his part and gave him directions to my place. It was just my luck to come to town. Just my luck to see Joe's dog, Wolf, outside the Polk O'Gold."

(Continued on page 78)

Birthplaces of hurricanes

WHEN THE WIND goes up to 100 knots or so — which sometimes happens in a hurricane from the Pacific or Indian Ocean — no structure above ground is safe from damage.

Barrow was hit by 140 mile per hour winds about 70 years ago, and most walls were blown over in the river.

In January, 1962, Fiji was struck by 160 knot winds from two "centers" separating off the island group.

One of these strengthened winds had its origin in the western Coral Sea, and in its northeast drift it became associated with another cyclone centered off New Caledonia.

One of the press follows it that the cyclone which affect our east coast here near Wallis Island, subsequently shot to Queensland.

In reality, most of the cyclones that form near Queensland head away from our shores. But a long list of disastrous cyclones have their root in the Solomons — New Hebrides — Fiji region, coming 1000 miles or more to afflict us.

through the distorted朗音 of light on the three wooden steps. He pushed through the glass door with its sign. By Marshall, Sheriff, Gil thought, inwardly a self-made man. Certainly a self-made sheriff — and to everyone's surprise a damn good one.

Sundown had grown and prospered under his law against gun toting. It became known as "By Marshall's town." His word was law — and his word was usually just. But yesterday afternoon, he had gone too far.

Only the old grandfather clock in the corner of the orderly office suddenly jolted Gil. The warmth of the polished wooden felt good.

Sheriff By Marshall sat with his bulk tilted in his chair, his back toward the pigeon-holed wall desk, and his feet on a pulled out wide drawer. He looked up from the book which he was reading. His grey eyes twinkled with Gil's — as they had twinkled with known intent — and gave no sign of fear.

he awoke, his hands slightly hooked, his fingers spread. His face felt shrank by crag-dread tears and fresh tears glazed his eyes — almost blinded him.

"Why?" Marshall demanded. "Or don't you need a reason?" When Gil didn't answer, he continued. "You got guns, plenty of 'em. But I'm still sheriff in this town, and there's still a law on the books that says, 'Chuck all guns unless you're passing through.' He held out a big hand for the 45 on Gil's gun belt.

"I've got reason — more than I can bear. I'm here to avenge my wife's death."

"Julie?" Marshall stood up, his hands spread fingers on the table between them. "I'm sorry, Gil. Mighty sorry. But why?"

"Durstian killed Julie and fired our home."

For a brief spell, only the ticking clock violated the silence of the room. Gil's eyes never left Marshall's, but he was aware of Marshall's hands



GOLDILOCKS





GOLDILOCKS

Janet's just combed her long blonde hair, and now she's striking these poses, where her golden locks are plain to view—with anything else which appeals to you.



SUB HERO'S LAST COMMAND

All Gilmore's instincts, all his navy training, told him to put the safety of his ship above everything else . . .

FACT / LEN GUTTRIDGE

JULY 3, 1942, dawned miraculously clear — for the Aleutians, the group of islands stretching out from the tip of Alaska towards Russia. Only a few fog patches lingered like shadowy ghosts, and from the US Submarine Growler's bridge rail a man could look fore and aft along her steel-gray 312-foot length and see both bows and stern. And as the Growler worked its way towards Kiska at periscope depth around 0540, Lieutenant Commander Gilmore had a sharply-defined view both of the harbor's backdrop of barren hills and the masts and superstructure of three war ships at anchor.

0640. For the past hour Gilmore had been riding the periscope handles, face glued to the eye-caps, his laconic commands steadily nudging the sub closer to the harbor until he saw lay about five miles out. He turned from the periscope at last and faced his executive officer.

"It wouldn't seem right, would it, Arnie?" His thin lips quivered in a smile. "I mean, winding up the Growler's first war patrol without at least an A for effort."

He jerked a thumb at the periscope. Lieutenant Commander Arnold Schade gripped the handles, shoved his face against the eyepiece. He whistled softly. "I see what you mean." His shoulders tensed. "Destroyer."

Gilmore was already planning the approach. With visibility as good the Growler would have to go as carefully. Gilmore couldn't afford to show his periscope even that an inch or two above the light swell. It would take only a single hasty lookout on any one of those destroyers and all three ships would be after the Growler at a 30-knot clip, letting fly with their own torpedoes and depth charges. Gilmore moved in slowly.

The Japs had made their grab for the Aleutians as a diversion before the battle of Midway. On June 3 the enemy task force commander, Admiral Kakuta, had sent 72 carrier-based bombers and escort Zeros thundering over Dutch Harbor, and the first enemy bombs slammed on North American soil. But even more annoying to Washington's high command was the way Kakuta's forces had set about occupying the western end of the bleak island chain, settling in on Kiska and Attu as though they intended to stay.

Since before the onslaught on Pearl Harbor, the top-shodden Aleutians had been patrolled by no more than half a dozen US Navy S-class submarines, a class written off for efficient fleet submarine duty as far back as 1923. But increasing the enemy's supply lines to his Aleutian garrisons would now call for blockade, hot-and-sure interception, and fast patrol tactics. So coded alarm signals flashed from the Navy Department and seven of the latest fleet subs quit the central Pacific and set course for Dutch Harbor. Among the first to arrive was the Growler, commanding just three months.

The Aleutian patrol was a submarine's nightmare. Bulkhead steel dropped a constant roar of condensation, the dampness posed a deadly peril of shorted switches and circuit gear spattering into a flesh fire, and frustrated seamen shifted constantly on soggy banks. Bridge lookout suffered torture. Waves surged endlessly over the sub's exposed bridge, and not even the protection of gloves kept fingers from freezing to bone-cold steel. Bloodshot eyes numbed from the strain of peering into what seemed a permanent wall of fog.

But today there was no fog —

when they could have used it — and that increased the danger as they moved closer.

In the Growler's control room, Arnie Schade eyed the skipper as they approached the harbor. This wasn't exactly the sort of action his guys had longed for. No slam-bang giddy ride, zipping torpedoes fore and aft. Instead, the situation called for cool-headed caution. Yet precisely because the skipper wasn't the type to jump the gun, not a man on the boat would have refused to shake his life on Commander Gilmore's judgment.

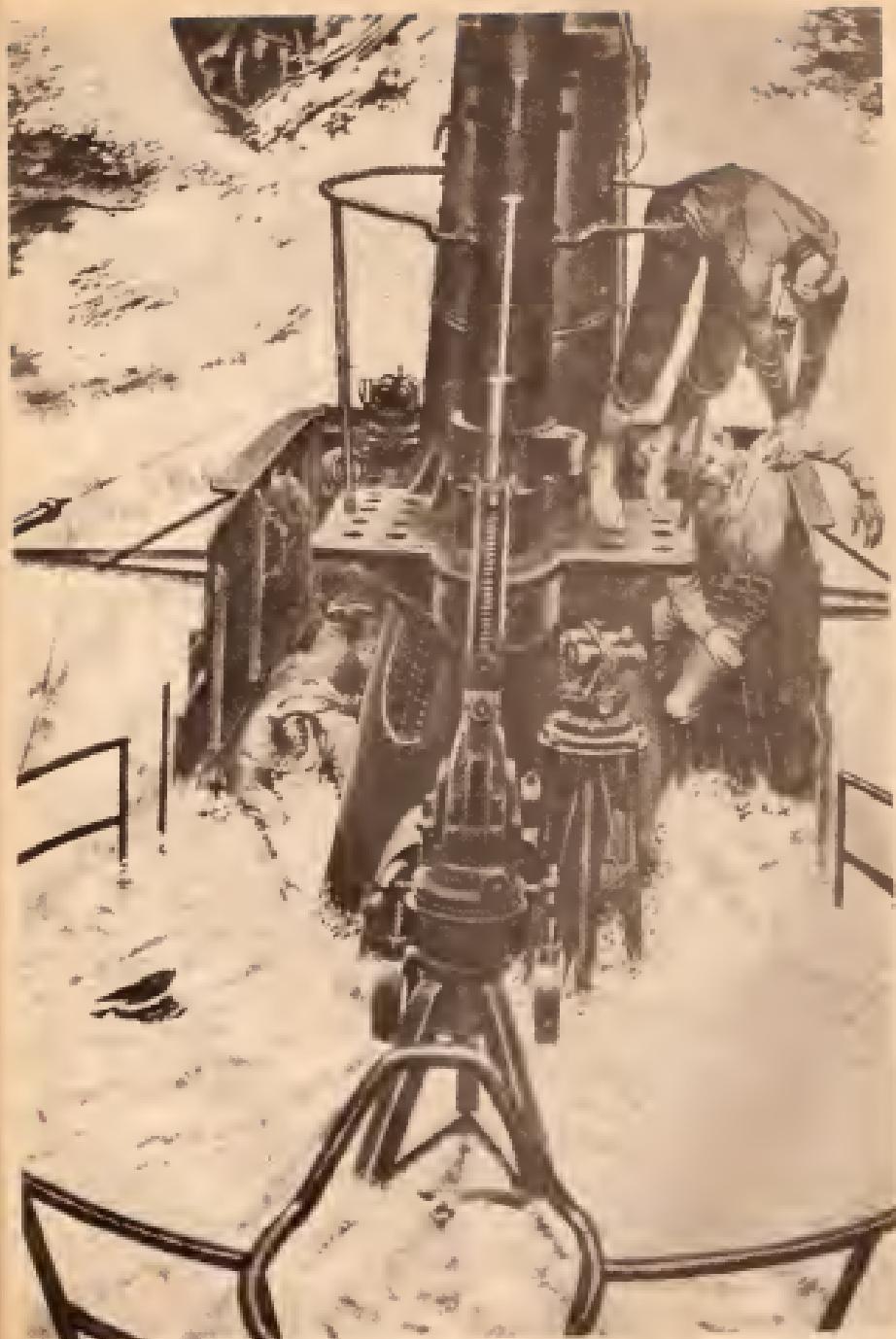
For one thing, they knew Gilmore was no greenhorn. At 49, the Alabama-born sub commander was a family man with a wife and two kids in New Orleans. His first Navy hatch had been as an ordinary seaman before he went on to Annapolis, graduating in 1926. He put in these years on the battleship Mississippi as an ensign and six months on the destroyer Perry.

In January, 1931, Gilmore reported to the Navy's submarine school at New London, Conn., for underway training. Before the Japs threw their surprise party at Pearl Harbor, he had completed a couple of peace-time tours as executive officer on the subs Shad and Dolphin. The Growler was his first wartime command. And he was the Growler's first commander.

"Slow engines. Rig for silent running."

The pulsing electric motors subsided to a hum. Anticipation rippled through the sub. Ramping silent at five knots with all tubes ready, the Growler began her silent approach.

The Japanese destroyer division had been ordered by Admiral Kakuta to escort a Kiska-bound merchant-



was packed to the gunwales with reinforcements for the blind гарнизон. Once the troop transport made safe harbor the destroyers had stood to sea again, only to be halted a couple of miles out by a radio flash forecasting dirty weather. They had dropped anchor in the Kasum, Shumari and the Arctic.

"Stand by bow tubes." Tense as the invincible cobh gripped the man in the Growler's control room. On Howard Gilmore it didn't show "Up periscope."

A soft whine as the long cylinder snaked up from its well. Gilmore pressed his eye to the eyepiece and issued calm commands. "Bearing—mark" No tremor in his voice "Range—mark."

"Two-five-oh," came the gunneryman's response. And moments later "One-seven-five-oh."

Seconds ticked by. In the forward torpedo room someone let a long breath out slowly. "You suppose the Old Man wants to go aboard one of them cars and say hello to the Japs before clubbing 'em?"

"Range... One-twelve-oh."

Arne Schade wasn't fooled by the skipper's detachment. Gilmore's demands had taken guts and rare daring. Destroyers were not considered suitable sub targets. Their shallow draft, high speed and maneuverability made them perfect barriers, unlikely victims.

The new electric torpedoes were not yet in general use, and those the Growler carried were of the fast



"You are interested in how you did it in the good old days, are the ethnologist?"

so-called "silence" variety. Racing across the sea, they trailed a dead giveaway of the sub's exact position, a broad ribbon of foam. Any sub captain turning a steaming torpedo at an enemy destroyer was inviting swift retaliation.

And always immediately after it wouldn't escape either. The Japs had equipped their escort vessels with massive sonar gear. No matter how

tortuously your sub zigzagged or roller-coastered, those hellish echoes would keep boomerangs off her hull, very likely attracting a shattering salvo of depth charges.

"Fire one." Growler barked as the first fish jumped from its tube and streaked for the Shumari. Eight tons ram in the control room ticked off the seconds. Schade finally muttered, "A man."

Gilmore, up in the conning tower, had already cried, "Fire two!"

The waiting this time was rewarded by a thunderclap that jolted the Growler. The 3000-ton Shumari staggered under the torpedo's impact and one of her Kampon boilers exploded. A fiery spear leaped from her bowels to impale the low overhang. Back broken just shaft the funnel, the destroyer listed heavily. Blazing smoke engulfed a frantic swarm of Jap sailors rushing for the side.

Arne Schade grabbed the ship's Takei telephone and yelled, "All hands, beat that! One Jap destroyer in the air!"

Gilmore permitted himself a quick grin then repressed issuing orders. The sub swung about and pointed on the second target.

"Fire three. Fire four." The third 21-inch fish streaked for the Kasum and blew her bows off. Bounding debris rained sailing around the Arne split-seconds before the herself caught the fourth torpedo square on decktops. The destroyer's



"Merry, you come right back here."

Black tracker's survival secrets

WHEN GOING ON a long "walkabout" in Australia's red center a forever-thirsty trooper quenches his thirst as much water as he could and then walked off in the cool of the evening.

Early in the morning he looked for a shady tree, and dug a hole under it, where he could sleep.

Then he sat down in the hole and pulled the sand in round him until only his head was out.

He stayed there in the cool and the dark until it got dark again. Then he continued on his way until the next day brought him home.

Traveling only by stages at night and rising up by day, the teacher covered distances that no white man could have traversed — simply by cutting down the natural layer of moisture from his body.

well-trained torpedo-men had, moments before, managed to launch two of their own missiles at the American sub, but scarcely a man on the *Arau* survived to see results. All three of her bowels blew up simultaneously, and 400 tons of fuel oil drenched the screaming crew with an avalanche of fire.

"Down, parrot!" Gilmore said.
"Time to eat and run, *Amy*!"

The Growler dived to 100 feet as the Azore's torpedoes swished overhead, close enough to be heard without the aid of sound gear. Also visible to the Growler's crew were receding paps and cracks of torpedoes and depth charges detonating in the tubes and racks of the Katori and Shiranui, still blazing furiously in Enko harbor.

Now that the Growler had shown what she could do, her crew hungared for more and the officers shared their enthusiasm. Gittens left his post and Kiska's a crack, let's go back as there had wight off the whole damned anchorage. Fog? We'll use a fog-sower. Come on, skipper.

It was too much to resist, and back into Erika went the Growler. Spotting a big fog ship in the gloom, Gilmore traded it in-and-out fashion, following an irregular pattern of dive and surface. And he surfaced once too often. A fog bank had just lifted, like a curtain neatly raised — to reveal a Japanese destroyer dead ahead, ploughing towards the Growler at top speed.

"Take her down," Gilmont ordered. Inwardly he cursed hell with himself for having yielded too readily to battle fever.

The destroyer chased Growler with depth charges as far as the approaches to Dutch Harbor. The sub ran deep. Most of the attacks were on but her off on range. Even so, the Growler made part with her sound gear crippled and a periscope tube bent.

Oliver waved the episode off.

and Rabaul to the south, the keystone of Japan's power in the South Pacific.

The night of April 15 was angry with lightning dancing along the horizon. Lieutenant Landon Davis had the badge. At 11:30 the standing lookout called, "Step off the starboard bow."

Briggs squirmed through knockers into the blackness. "Destroyer at 1000 yards," he shouted down the conning tower hatch. "Call the captain." To the knockers he yelled. "Close the trucks!"

In the control room Commander Gilmore took the periscope, assessed the situation and ordered a submerged attack at periscope depth. "Stand by to fire bow tubes." Four bow tubes were fired.

All mixed?" Gilmore heard a mixed chorus of voices. In all probability the fault wasn't the Growler's any way — it was no secret that an appalling percentage of seaplanes based on L.A. airfields were defective.

That was a thought for which Gilmore had no time. He was watching something else. The destroyer. He stepped back quickly from the periscope. "She's coming out at us," he murmured.

The destroyer passed southward.





"Dear, go with the chart, I've just made what would be considered in Wall Street circles as a very good business deal."

thumping across suitable to the Growler's crew before the sub plunged deeper. The Growler's sound gear detected additional ships on the scene, one passing overhead. Gelmore held his boat at 13 fathoms. She glided like an underwater ghost.

"Rig for depth charges," Gossom granted the order. There was no thrill in being a target. The shielded mechanism included the air-conditioning. Soon the heat of engines, motors and relays would be creeping through the boat. The plenum and helmsmen had to shift to hand controls and soon they would be grasping from tuning the rudder and gun fire by the sheer muscle power.

Down came the depth charge — click boom — oowh click boom — oowh. The sub's hull whipped and rolled with every concussion. Men stumbled, groaned, and cursed as they were pitched into brass bolts on the sawing deck plates. Light bulbs popped, vent lines and power cables twanged like a banjo's guitar. Men gagged on

mouthfuls of cork dust, giant fishes and light-bulb fragments, whirling about in small blizzards.

Three hours and 23 depth charges later it was over. Damage substantially minor.

But there was an unusually sober look on Commander Gelmore's face.

He had just made a tour of the ship. "That depth-charging was tough on the men," he said quietly. "They would like to pay the Japs back for it. I think they should."

The moment she broke surface, Growler's lookouts spotted the tell-tail end of a Jap convoy. With a single torpedo, the York sub sent a 2000-ton gasoline tanker to the bottom. Three days later the Growler shifted location and began crisscrossing up and down the warm west of New Britain. She sank a 6000-ton cargo ship within 40 minutes of sighting.

On September 4, the Growler slammed torpedoes into the Kasikino, a 4000-ton ammunition ship, until she blossomed into a monstrous fireball, and 36 hours later a survivor of Growler's fish sliced a 2000-ton man in two and both halves sank like buoys. By the end of her patrol the Growler had accounted for no less than 26,000 tons of enemy shipping.

But of the Growler's second tilt out was a jaded patrol, her third was a dead loss. The Japs were making a last desperate effort to save the remnants of their garrison on Guadalcanal, and all available subsurface craft had been dispatched by the Imperial Navy to keep the supply and evacuation routes flushed of American torpedoes. The Growler came crashing sailing for home, with a fresh load of ton fish on her racks, modernized surface radar, and a brand-new 20 mm cannon mounted to fire offboard.

There ought to have been opportunities galore for action. But there weren't. The Growler's damaged crew spent their time idly watching planes swooping with US planes.

Then came the fatal fourth patrol.

The Growler cleared Bushiri, Australia, on New Year's Day, 1943,

Hidden cargoes in cane cane

WHEN SUGARCANE was cut and loaded by hand — very hard work — little or no rebinds accompanied it to the mill.

But now that the giant press is mechanically cut and loaded, unless green tags, tags, pieces of wood and everlasting stones are incorporated with the stalks,

men are employed at the mill to search for combustible matter and report it. Women must constantly run large stones which may damage the mill's chipping gear at the rollers.

Farmers are fined a pound weight of any stalk taken from their meadow or land of cane and stones weighing 12 lbs or more are often "caught."

A man at Pine Creek mill, near Bawra, "hooked" two stones aggregating 32 lbs one day last season, and the year before another chap found a monster weighing 75 lbs.

and returned to her storage silo at the enemy's shipping lanes.

The Growler was making an approach south of Stefan Strait for a night surface attack on a convoy heading through Gamme Channel. It was a portside convoy - two merchantmen under escort of a pair of patrol craft. Gilmore established range and course, then sent the sub on a fast run south which he calculated would give the Growler a position ahead and on the convoy's projected route.

Gilmore had figured accurately. The convoy came steaming down the track about 0300 next morning and, torpedoes ready, the Growler closed on target.

Then the escorts spotted her. Swinging out in a power maneuver, they came in from opposite directions, three-chasers bearing. Shells arched over the sub's conning tower and bridge.

"Lookouts below," Gilmore shouted. "Clear the bridge. Take her down fast. Dive. Dive." The sub plunged to periscope depth about 40 feet down, but the high-speed screws could be heard above on either bow.

"Rig for depth charges. Rig for silent running."

This time the pounding was really fierce. Shock waves battered the 312-foot sub like a gatlinggunner, and as she did her crazy dance 66 men were thrown about like toy soldiers in a shaken shadowbox. It seemed to go on and on. At 0402, after nearly running violent concussion found a weak spot.

A torpedoman in the forward torpedo room was just opening his mouth to curse the Japs above, when a jet of water splashed into his face



"You'll like the boat! Mr. Silence is a most friendly master-ship refresher."

with the kick of a high-pressure hose.

In the central room Gilmore got the report from Damage Control regarding manhole gasket in the forward ballast tank - water pouring into the forward torpedo room.

The commander was ready. "Get a bucket brigade in that torpedo room fast. Cover that leak with sheet rubber and deck planks."

Gilmore knew it would be tough and go. Submerged, only very limited emergency repairs were possible and they might not be enough. But he

wasn't about to surface yet. There was a lull in the depth charging, but it could be a trick to lull him toopsis.

Then, as the damage control crew labored in the steaming, smoky water, the depth charging started again. The crew worked on.

They stopped the leak. But would the makeshift plug hold? Gilmore waited for another checkup of the depth-charge silvers, then cautiously sent the Growler up to periscope depth. A sweep of the scope revealed empty map but for a distant smudge of the convoy's smoke and a lone destroyer on the scattered horizon.

Gilmore ordered "all ahead full", shoving course west, and ate until rightfull did he break surface so the ruptured manhole could be opened and a new gasket installed.

Less than 36 hours later, on February 7, 1943, Commander Howard Gilmore said his submarine for the last time.

"Stop on the starboard bow" Lieutenant Davis was Officer of the Deck, and he'd spotted the distant shape before the lookout.

Gilmore climbed up on bridge. After checking with Davis, he ordered a "turnaway", giving his torpedomen an opportunity to make ready their tubes. Another 20 minutes and the sub had swung back to close on surface.

(Continued on page 71)



"Well, this is goodbye, Mrs. — it's been fun."

YOU'VE GOT TO BE QUICK

He was just one more shy country boy down on his luck in the city — until he found somebody he cared enough to fight for.

FICTION / HERBERT T. FLETCHER

AT FIRST the trip down from Brisbane with Barton had been a bit of a lark — the "working holiday" idea that sounded good to Macsey's 20-year-old ears at the time did promised a bit of excitement in his life.

Now it was a grey depression choking the life out of him because he couldn't find a job himself. Probably, Macsey thought it was because he had "country" written all over him — or was it because he'd done only timber cutting before and knew nothing else?

Barton had done all right, he could do anything with wheels and quickly landed himself a job transporting courses to South Australia and back. He hadn't seen or heard of Barton since. To hell with Barton, he thought, he wasn't much of a mate anyway. I'm all right, Jack.

In Macsey's pocket was his last \$5, and no prospects of anything unless he found a job. Four days already of hunting for work and nothing but worn boot leather to show for it. He could do with a good publicity officer and a brass band to promote himself!

Finally he sat on the GPO steps in the sun, watching the people shouldering by and wondering what he should do next.

The mass of humanity hurried past unnoticed, and his thoughts went back to the girl again. The one he'd spoken to on his first day in Sydney. He'd been looking for a postcard to send home to his parents, the usual "everything fine" card that would keep them from worrying, when she had come from behind the counter and asked could she help.

He tried to ease her from his thoughts, but like the tide her face returned again and again. He bit his lip, conscious of his weakness, and knowing, no matter how hard he fought against it, he wouldn't rest till he saw her again.

And that, he knew, would only make it that much worse.

He sighed in annoyance, not wanting to see her and yet knowing he had no power over the feeling. As he moved along Pitt Street he hoped some distraction would turn him from her path. But eventually he found himself in front of the large stationery shop, staring at the window display of items he had no interest in at all.

Then finally, unable to hold back any longer, he was drawn inside. His body was jangling with nerves, and his eyes went to the counter behind which she worked.

He saw her immediately and his mouth tightened, as a number of sensations went through his body and he was very conscious of the throbbing of his heart and the aching pain and needles.

She had a round, pleasant but rather ordinary face, and yet he was attracted to her with a misleading compassion which he couldn't account for. He'd always imagined himself chasing an attractive girl — never a plain one. She'd be 19, he thought, staring at her, a year or two younger than himself. He couldn't keep his eyes off her.

She had red hair and he could see her well-shaped legs through the glass counter. He continued to study her, pleased he had come in here in one way and disappointed in himself

when he thought more about the complications.

He was bitter at the silly way he'd come in just to look her up, and he couldn't understand why he was drawn so irresistibly to her like a plant reaching for the sun. And yet he couldn't force himself to turn and walk away.

"Hello," she said as he moved to her counter. "still here in Sydney, I see." She smiled briefly.

He nodded as he tried to uncurl his thick tongue, all his intended compensation lost within the blank depths of his mind. He hoped when he forced his voice it wouldn't come out tangled up like it usually did when he spoke to girls he spoke to.

"He smiled at that — what girls? The one in the Post Office, or Wendy who worked in the fruit shop and even speaking to those girls was something that sapped his courage.

"How are you today?" he managed to say, his nerves quivering like a pot of worms. Why did he find it so difficult to converse with girls? Why? Why? Why?

"Oh, busy as usual," she said with a grin. "You know how it is." Her eyes held his and she poised. Her mouth was rather tight, he noticed now — not that it mattered to him.

"Yeah, I know," he said. He wondered whether he ought to buy something inexpensive, to keep the base off her back in case she was soon talking to a customer.

"I'd like a pen," he said, "just a cheap one." He wondered why he was acting so foolishly, wanting to spend what little money he had left on a pen.





"I must remind you that we never had this service and eating meat on Fridays was permitted and English was used for the Mass."

She reached beneath the counter, and he started to look down the front of her dress and then turned his head away with a pang of guilt.

"What about these?" she asked, placing a box on the counter with colored pens arranged in it.

He took a deep breath, aware of the roasting in his ear, the weakness in his knees. He could smell her perfume and he wished again he hadn't come here to torment himself, make a fool of himself.

He clutched the counter and opened his mouth. "What time do you knock off?" he heard himself asking. He could have bitten his tongue off, because he knew he had taken a positive step now and couldn't retreat.

She looked surprised and he saw the quick intake of breath, the fingers clenched white - and was that a look of pleasure in her eyes?

"Five o'clock," she said, watching him intently. "Why?"

He swallowed, trying to dislodge the ball of guilt in his throat. Why didn't he run now, instead of standing here getting beat up with...

"Is it all right if I wait for you?" he asked, feeling sure he had clichéd and had not made an idiot of himself and praying earnestly she wouldn't laugh at him. And yet, in one way he wished she would turn him down, tell him to beat it, or whatever girls told you when they weren't interested in you.

He crossed his fingers now as he waited, sure that everybody nearby in the store had heard him sit and were now watching and listening.

latched on to a girl to help him spend it!"

As he stumbled off he realized with surprise he hadn't bought anything in the shop, his last \$5 still remained intact.

So far

It was five o'clock and the hurrying people streaming past made him feel he was hemmed in and suffocating. The traffic was a slow exhaust-roasting procession that made him wonder why people insisted on driving into the city...

Shops were closing now. There was a kind of excitement, as though prisoners had been released into the daylight again, and he kept his eyes open for the girl.

He realized he was behaving foolishly when he was all but broke, but he couldn't help it. He knew he'd be like a fish out of water if he tried to ignore her.

You thought of sheiks, he told himself, and it meant money straight away - money he could ill-afford. That's what Barton always said. He scowled as he remembered - damn Barton, anyway.

For uncomfortable seconds he tried to make his mind up, decide on what he was going to say and do when she came out. In the night of panic, he made a half-hearted attempt to walk off when he suddenly saw her step out on to the pavement. He hesitated, caught between confusion and consternation.

He stiffened as he saw her searching for him in the audience.



"Remember when we were clean and we were dirty?"

The first Australian-made car

THE FIRST motor vehicle ever built in Australia was produced by Herbert Thompson, of Armidale, New South Wales, in 1885.

Thompson built the car around a lightweight steam engine, and described it as a steam-powered motor phaeton. Steam power was preferred by many early car designers, because it offered greater reliability and a better top speed.

Thompson constructed a number of similar cars before the turn of the century, and in 1900 a Thompson car made the first overland car journey in Australia.

The car travelled from Bathurst, NSW, to Melbourne — a distance of 4930 miles. The漫漫 journey took 10 days, and the car's average running speed was 5.72 miles an hour.

packed crowds, and before he could move he noticed a figure stop beside her.

From where he was standing he heard the man speak. "Want a lift today, Jane?"

Macey stopped in bewilderment, wondering if this was his opportunity to pull out while he was still in front, when she noticed him and waved excitedly.

The sight of her smile injected much-needed confidence into him. He found himself beside her, and the man turned cold eyes his way. "What do you want, pal?" he snapped.

"Sorry, Bob, I'm taking the home," she said and raised her eyes at Macey, eyes that seemed uncertain and asking for support.

Macey studied the man, tall, solidly framed, an executive type with the breath of a lunch-hour drinker.

"You've got to be quick," Macey said with a grin, "I asked her first." He noticed the dimness of his voice gave away his nervousness, and he stood there shuffling his feet and wishing he were a hundred miles away.

"Who is this fellow?" the other demanded. "You know I always pick you up Wednesday, Jane."

"Not this Wednesday, thanks, Bob," she said, her eyes worried, turned once more to Macey as if looking for support.

Macey stood there flustered and tongue-tied, at a loss for something to say. He was not used to arguing verbally, especially over a girl. In the past he'd mostly found it quicker and more simple to settle any edifice arguments with his fists.

He looked at the man and it was plain this situation was going to develop into a heated dispute.

"You'd better take a powder," the man said threateningly. "I've got two mafus in that car over there."

Macey snarled the girl, the anger welling inside him, frustrated by his inability to talk back. He realized if he back-pedaled now the other

would put the blouse on and all would be lost, especially his chances with the girl.

There was a ringing in his ears again, and he realized he had grabbed the man's coat in his clenched fist with uncontrollable anger and was dragging him along the pavement.

"I mightn't talk good," Macey grunted, "but I'll accommodate you if you want to step down this lane and argue it out my way!"

He saw the relief wash into the girl's face and the uncertainty in the man's. The man blurted. "No need to get rough, fella," he groaned. "Let go my shirt."

Macey released him, his voice a hiss. "Don't try to boasting me, mate I don't like being badgered on."

"Don't hit him, please!" the girl said, grabbing Macey's arm.

"Thank you're smart, don't you?" the man snarled. "Making a fool of me in front of my mate."

Macey assured himself, the anger like hot fat inside him. He was on familiar ground when it came to fighting. His eyes flashed a warning. "You're the one making a fool of yourself," he said. "You should be more careful what you say and who you say it to."

"I'll see you again," the man threatened as he turned away.

There was the sound of laughter from inside the car as the man moved over to it before getting in with the two men he called out. "I won't forget you, fella."

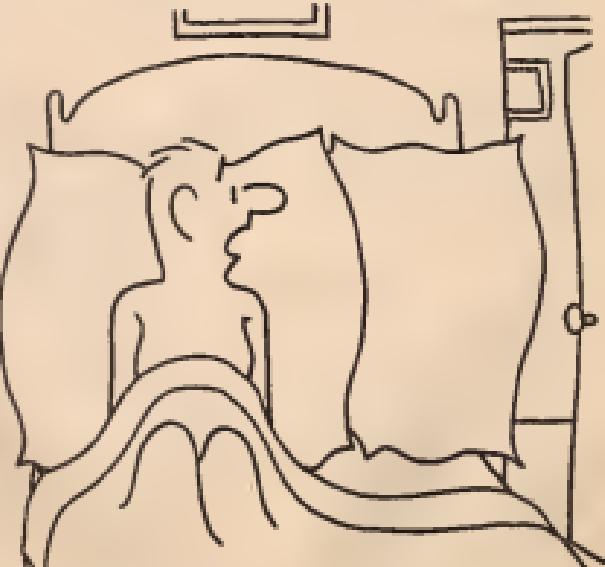
Macey yelled back, oblivious to the curious bystanders gathered around. "Don't press your luck," he called. Then he turned to her. "I'm sorry for making a show of you like that," he said. "I shouldn't have..." "I'm glad!" she said. "Bob is rather demanding and a bit of a pest. Don't let's talk about it."

He nodded and then remembered something. "By the way, I mean to tell you that I'm out of work and almost broke! I..."

She looked at him as if surprised. "What's that supposed to mean?" she said tightly, her eyes suddenly cold.

A flood of embarrassment assailed his face. "I mean I wouldn't be able to take you to a show or even get you a taxi," he explained.

Her face relaxed. "Oh, at that all."



"Sorry dear! My dentures are beginning to wear off!"

she said. "For a moment I thought you meant something else." She tried to laugh. "You can never be too careful — Sydney isn't the fly-by-night place it's made out to be."

He grunted and rubbed at his chin. "Let's have a coffee," he announced, changing the subject. "I can afford that much, anyway."

She selected a small coffee shop nearby. It was cramped inside, the tables so small their knees touched as they sat opposite each other. The seats were hard and stiff-backed and the cups were narrow at the bottom with wide tops like saucers and the coffee was hot, sweet and tangy.

They enjoyed their coffee slowly, making talk and looking away when their eyes met.

He didn't do or like either. She lived at Campus and she'd never been to Brisbane.

They had little in common, but they found a lot to talk about and the wet good company having him laughing in no time. He hadn't talked with a gal with a sense of humour before and he found he was enjoying himself and at the same time losing a little of his nervousness.

She mentioned there could be a temporary job for him at the timber yard where her brother worked at Gidgee.

"That'd be good for a while," he said. "I'm used to working with timber."

"They pay good money," she said. "Ray's been there for years."

pull her chair out as she rose. He'd seen that done on television and he felt pleased with himself.

They went by train to Campus and it was getting dark as he walked her from the station. He felt he'd found someone to give his life new interest, someone to keep him in Sydney.

"I'll wait for you tomorrow afternoon," he said. "I'll try and get a job somewhere in the morning, there are a few factories now where I live. No use wasting the day."

"If there's a vacancy at the timber yard, Ray will list it up for you, don't worry."

He turned to leave and let go her soft hand with reluctance. "Thanks," he said, "goodnight."

He watched her going up the path and she waved. As she let herself in the front door she waved again before disappearing inside.

The night was suddenly cold and lonely as he walked back toward the railway. He felt like a school lad again, going through the awkward stage of puppy love. He wondered what was going to happen to take it all from him.

The experience was completely different to his feeling back home on the rare occasions he spoke to girls at a sports' evening or the annual Show. This was what he had been waiting for, dreaming of for so long. It had finally happened.

He kept thinking about this strange sensation within him as he walked. Now he knew that there was a valid reason for it as, once again, he brought her feet to mind.

And now he had to return to his cheap share-room in Newtown, to be down-dwarled by street and basement traffic and planes coming down low on a landing path to Mascot.

He didn't take any notice of the car which had pulled into the kerb behind him. At the last instant, some vague sense of prescience warned him of the deadly rush of feet. He dodged nimbly and swung himself about, at the ready for anything.

There were three of them, shadowy figures in the dark street, and their intentions were very obvious. At the first figure swept past where he had been a moment before Macay punched at him, then grunted as blows rained on him from behind as the other two closed in.

Then it was a frantic struggle in the darkness, of jostling back and fighting forward, the crack of bone on flesh and the scuffing of desperate, twisting bodies — curses and swearing, a struggling battle for survival and supremacy.

(Continued on page 80)

The Koala's monster ancestor

THE AUSTRALIAN KOALA is known the world over as a gentle, slow-moving, tree-dweller, covered with soft brownish-grey fur. Next to the kangaroo, it is probably the best-known native Australian animal.

Despite resemblances caused by adaptation for its environment, it is not related to any of the true bears, sloths or relatives. Its nearest relative is to the lesser, ground-dwelling koeloid, but even there the relationship is not very close.

But although today the koala stands alone on its branch of the primate-managed family, paleontologists have found remains of one of its ancient ancestors in Queensland fossil beds.

Beside this ancestor, Koalaensis, the present-day koala would look like a dwarf.

A modern koala grows to about 20 inches in length, measured from the tip of its nose to the base of its tail. But Koalaensis was about 10 feet long, and weighed about half a ton — 200 to 400 times as much as his descendant.

Obviously, Koalaensis was too big to live in trees. He must have been a ground-dwelling creature in the first place, who became smaller and better adapted to life off the ground to escape from enemies and to find food.

"I'm sorry about what happened too," she said. "I forgot it was Wednesday. Bob usually plays squash now where I live on Wednesdays and he drops me off on the way. He was a little embarrassed in front of his mates."

Macay laughed, shrugging it off. The incident was all over as far as he was concerned. "Took me by surprise. I didn't know what to think at first."

"I thought he might hurt you."

Macay stopped and shook his head. "Not likely. I grew up with seven brothers and usually I had at least three fights before breakfast each morning. I'd sooner walk away than fight, if I can. There's nothing to be gained by fighting." He put his elbows on the stamp-proof table. "It's only girls that fight me and make me congressional. Let's talk about you."

He'd guessed about right, she was 20, played tennis and liked dancing.

"I'm not frightened of work," he said, "so if you get your brother to put in a word for me I won't let him down as far as working is concerned."

She didn't say anything, sitting there staring at him as though he had said something that would make the world stop spinning. Then she nodded slowly. "You don't have to tell me that, I knew just by looking at you."

"Most of the employment blouses didn't say that by looking," he said cryptically. "How come you can?"

"I know what to look for," she said quickly.

He let it pass at that. Probably, he thought, she could see something in him — he'd heard about people who could read you like a book.

"I'd better take you home," he said at last.

"I enjoyed the coffee and your company," she said. "Thanks."

He grunted and remembered to



ADAM, May, 1973 59

A MAN CAN GET HELLISH LONELY



Women outback get a bit restless when their men are away for too long . . .

THE WESTERN sky was stained blood-red as the sun slid slowly down towards the Baldilba Mountains 30 miles across the plain. But I had eyes neither for the setting sun nor the wrinkled brown land. From my vantage point on the clay bank above the creek to where I had swum a few minutes previously, I was gaping at Tina Dunn, the only white female in 80 miles, lying on her belly near the water's edge, her brown body still wet and glistening after her swim.

She moved slightly forward, and her bare backside pushed up. My

breath caught in my throat and my chest tightened as I stared at the perfect curves of that white, round rump. And to think that Tina was almost 40 — old enough to be my mother!

She got up then and stood feet together, her head thrown back. Then she stretched slowly and sensuously like a cat. When she turned her lean brown body in my direction I forgot to breathe for a second, but Tina did not appear to be least perturbed and made no effort to cover herself. Instead, she smiled up at me, her dark eyes gleaming.

"I hope my being here in the raw doesn't embarrass you, Arty," she said, quite matter-of-factly.

"I'm — I'm sorry, Tina," I

managed to stammer. "I — I — didn't know you were here, until —"

"Like hell you didn't," she laughed merrily, brushing her long black hair from her forehead. "You've been standing on that bloody bank at least five minutes trying to make up your mind if you're a man or what."

I blushed at the trout. The bitch had seen my reflection in the clear waters of the pool, and now she was daring me, challenging my manhood — the whole 19 years of it.

After all, Big Jim had been gone nearly a week now — he and the black, Sam Boceph. Maybe she was feeling like a jumbie in the grass.

FICTION /

HERBERT C. HEILIG





"It's Peter Piper, Dear. Do we need any Pickled Peppers?"

She didn't look her age either, I thought, standing there stark. Slim as she was, her breasts were large and quite firm and high. Her small waist seemed to narrow, almost manly hips — but there was nothing manly about Tina.

Her lips curved in a small smile again and she laughed softly. Then she stooped down, picked up her clothes. She did not put them on, but walked slowly away upstream.

"She's fast down to a turn," I decided. All the primitive hunger made me urged me to follow her.

I stood for a few seconds more watching Tina's slowly disappearing naked form, her movements graceful enough to stir me. Who was I trying to fool, anyway? All right, I was baited enough.

I slid down the clay bank and followed her. A little farther along the creek I found Tina in a secluded place on the bank, her clothes in a heap beside her. She had settled herself on the soft grass, belly down like when I had first spotted her. Her rump wriggled seductively as she heard me approach.

I bent down then and slapped her firm, bare rump.

She turned full over and laughed in my face. "Now just for that, young Artie, you can jump in the

creek and cool off. It might be good for what ails you."

But I saw the bare breasts prizing up at me and the seductive white flesh of her body, there in the waning light of late afternoon on a grassy creek bank.

"I have a better idea," I said, "to cure what ails me."

I forgot then that I had ever felt embarrassed, that she was about 15 years older than I was. I forgot, too,

that she was Big Jim Dunn's wife, that he had left me to look after the camp as well as take care of Tina and Sam's horses, Nita, while he and the black ward to the station property way off behind the Bighills to buy a stock of horses.

When I sank down on the grass beside her, Tina pretended to draw away. Then she laughed, smutty, rolled peccary, slid an arm under my shoulder. I put my own arm around her naked waist and pulled her close to me. She tilted her head back and nuzzled it in the curve of my neck, rubbing her cheek against my chin like a cat, and making strange little sounds in her throat.

Then she started to move her hips and shoulder, pressing hard against me as if trying to get even closer. From then on it was a fight of almost primitive savagery, a fight to get closer and closer to one another. A struggle for absolute fulfillment.

After it was over we lay quiet. I held her close to me, breathing softly, and we dozed. Neither of us were aware of a black form lurking on the bank above us.

Ten minutes later, perhaps a quarter of an hour, we roused, and I felt a cold grasping of guilt twisting my guts. I rolled over on my side, feeling sick with self loathing.

"God," I said, "We shouldn't be doing this, Tina — after all you're Big Jim's wife."

"Hell, you just think of that!" And she gave a strange, vicious little laugh and her dark eyes flashed almost savagely. "Why should I worry about Big Jim?" she snarled. "What's he ever done for me? — Ten years married and not one lad to show for it."

"Perhaps it's not his fault."

"You believe that?"

The bush weather forecasters

BUZZARDEN DON'T overrate the croaking frog as a prophet of drought breaking rain, in spite of its legendary reputation.

They know the frog reacts to growing moisture — humidity — in the air, and that doesn't necessarily mean there will be a downpour.

Stone-birds squawk, but that doesn't necessarily mean a storm. Spring — the storm season — is often quite periods.

The bush spiders appear to know something about the weather, though. When they spin their webs in the open it won't rain, no matter how thick the weather looks.

Sheep and goats climb up to shrubs and trees when a drought is imminent, and butterflies and moths seek the shelter of trees when strong winds are coming.

The common cricket and its buzz is the best indicator of coming rain, but his activity is something only the people of the far outback see.

When the begins to roar like mad, the drought will end in a few days. The rain will not come until the new "monsoon" has dried out completely.



"I once took a splinter out of his paw."

I stared at her amazement, then my body "No."

She stretched out her arms to me I laughed a laugh almost as savage as hers had been. After that I was lost in a frenzy, plunging renewal of fresh lovemaking.

That night, weary after my exercise, I was about to blow out the hurricane lantern and retire early when I heard a sound at my hut door. Now who could that be? Surely not Tim come for another session?

I opened the door and there stood Nika, Sam Boorrah's harr - stark naked. That in itself was nothing, of course. Nika always was naked, except for some Ralys G-string affair.

I said, "What is it you want, Nika?"

She peeped and glanced towards my bunk. "Me come in?"

I frowned a no welcome. "What for?"

She pointed to the bunk. "Me stay longs night with you, Master Arty."

She tossed her head and advanced further into the room. Standing there in the dim light of the hurricane I was reminded that Nika was better built and more attractive than the average gal. Somewhere along the hereditry trail there could have been a dash of white man's blood. Her naked body made a ripe, flowing curve, and her breasts were heavier and rounder than the average bitch's.

Her eyes too, were different. They were a deep coffee like hers, with sultry lights stirring through them, as she regarded me in seductive fashion. And she was still young - younger than I was. Then I thought of Tim - nearly twice as old as Nika, but white, and hellish exciting.

big grin and shouted me three or four pounds of drinks in rapid succession.

I said, "You was first prize in a lottery or something?"

"Better than that," he boasted. "Tim gave me a son three months back."

"You old devil," I said. "I didn't think you had it in you!"

"Took me over 20 years to do the trick," he laughed happily. "And that's not all the news -"

"You mean there's another one on the way?"

"No - of course not. It's about Nika -"

"What's she been up to?" I asked, just a trifle curious.

"The same thing as Tim," said Big Jim. "Only she had a female accompany - and on the same day as Tim gave birth to our son."

"What do you know? It must be the climate out there, Jim."

"Must be," he nodded absently. Then as an afterthought he said, "Nika's kid appears to have a good dash of white in her."

I turned away in case he noticed that my face was a trifle red. "Well," I suggested, "Hasn't Nika got some white blood?"

He ghosted his hand. "Not that much." Then after a pause he said, "You wouldn't have been putting it with Nika that time when Sam and I were away, Arty?"

"Oh, come off it now," I denied with pretended indignation. "Nika's John."

"A good looking one though," said Big Jim. "I wouldn't have blamed you if you had of played around with her, Arty. A man can be foolish lonely out there."

I couldn't think of a single thing to say.



"The Press is writing. Everyone amazement and right-angled."

THE SHARK GOD OF MOTURA

Continued from page 8

He patted the skull on its frequent sores. "But at the first of every year, I'll drink a toast to you, that I promise."

Sam gave a light, two-fingered salute. "So had and farewell, Christy, sleep tight and pleasant dreams! No one will ever bother you here, because this is the most sacred place; and even old Ranga wouldn't dare come near the TAPU reef. You'll never be found. But for a long time those natives will talk you up, telling how their white shark-god watched you away."

Sam moved down from the ledge and the skeleton, and began to lower himself into the black pool. But before his rubber fins could ring the moon-like surface, he leapt back, his breath catching painfully in his throat.

Something huge and white, with a great dorsal fin, sank into the depth and disappeared!

He bent down, peering head, trying to penetrate the darkness of the pool, but all he could see was a faint phosphorescent glimmer deep down, like the flick of a lantern's wick.

Then, suddenly, the hollow tomb reverberated under the force of an unexpected grinding sound, like a huge foot being slowly shut on rusty hinges. Beneath his body, the ledge shook as if in the final throes of an earth tremor. And the water rose in the vault as if to engulf him, so swiftly that he had to seek refuge on the ledge next to the skeleton.

As swiftly as it had risen the water receded in the pool. There was no indication that there had been an upheaval save for the dripping ledge below and the gentle tapping at its edge.

Sam huddled on the high ledge, teeth clamped hard, his stomach a tight knot of pain.

Slowly, he lowered himself to the ledge below, stared into the black mystery of the pool. Then, seeing no

movement, he fixed his goggles and put his face below the surface. Instantly he saw what had happened — the arch of the tunnel opening into the pool had given way, and now its passage was blocked.

He dropped into the pool and swam down. It took him only a few seconds to convince himself that the massive coral obstruction was securely wedged there, with not even the tiniest space to insert his fingers.

Trembling and whimpering, Sam crawled back to the ledge, and lay there, beating his fins frantically against the stony coral.

"You damned fool!" he berated himself. "Now see what you've let yourself in for!" He alternately wept and cursed. In the foyers of hopelessness, he even yelled for help.

While he finally lifted his head he saw the crabs scuttled on the ledge above, their stalked eyes alighted towards him. "Oh, Christ, no, no, no!" he blurted.

Suddenly, Sam lifted his head, straining to listen. The sound of a schooner's bell reached him faintly. The Moana! The irregular buckling of her auxiliary engine coming closer and closer as she entered the passage into the lagoon.

"Help! Help!" he shouted. "It's Sam Powers! I'm trapped inside the reef!"

But a series of high explosions broke over the barrier-reef, drowning out his voice as the Moana started the reef and headed toward the customary anchorage.

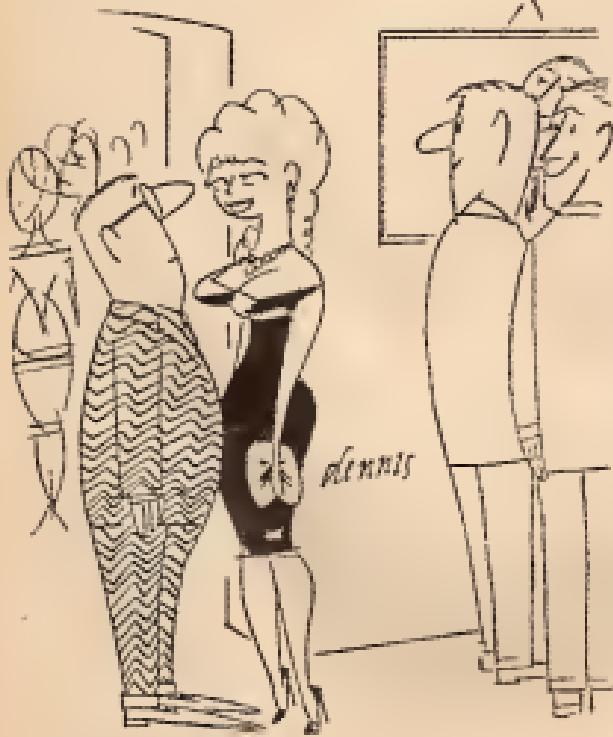
The light faded in the coral vault. Exhausted and shivering, Sam lay stretched out on the damp ledge. Then abruptly, it was totally dark in the crypt, and he became conscious of the dry scratching sounds of the crabs on the ledges about him. "Oh, God," he whispered, "I'll make everything right! You can't leave me to this!"

Daylight finally woke into his nightmares. And now there was a new sound — the rattle of the Moana's which had raised her anchor.

Sam pressed his swollen mouth to the coral crack. "Please, please, don't go! Don't go! Don't leave me in here!"

But the schooner's engine exploded into life. Sam beat with his hands against the coral prison until they bled, he growled and snarled agonizingly, and for one wild instant he almost crashed his forehead against a sharp coral stalactite.

Then he lay still, eyes wide with horror, breathing without breathing as the schooner moved out along the reef passage. The labored sounds of the engine settled down to a regular cadence, like the strange throbbing



"In case we get separated at this party, Harold, thanks for bringing me."

of old Runga's sharkskin drum. At last it faded and merged with the faraway murmur of the sea.

When the smell of Motors had disappeared below the horizon, Captain Riley went off to talk with his Tahitian mate, Oro, who was making an inventory of Sam Powers' personal belongings.

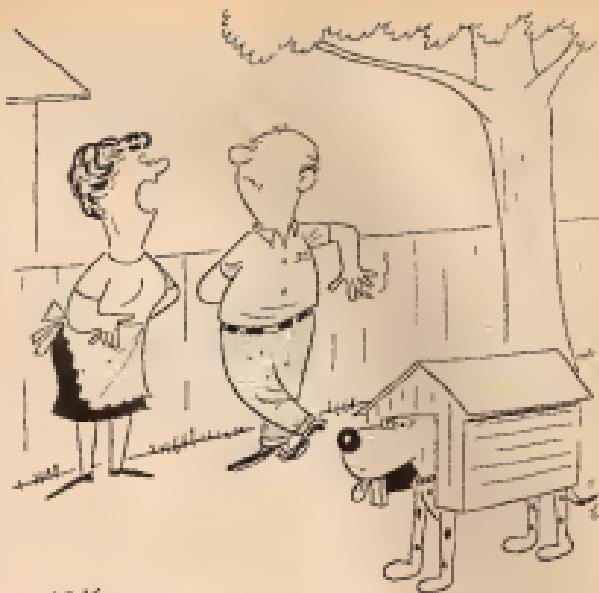
"What I don't savvy," the Captain said, "is how old Runga knew Sam wouldn't be leaving with us for Tahiti. You heard what he said: 'No use go Motors for Powers-time, he go 'way same funny way like Turi!'"

Oro had attended the mission-school in Tahiti, but he was still bound to Polynesian superstitions. He said in a hushed voice: "I think Heomata take away Sam just like Charlie. We look everywhere on Motors, but Sam not anywhere."

"Yeah, we even stayed overnight to have another look this morning. I guess we must have looked under every coconut on that island. Covered every inch of the lagoon, except that taboo reef. No use hunting there."

Riley held up two fingers: "Charlie and Sam — a very strange business."

He drew in his breath jerkily. He decided he'd be more polite to old Runga if future...



AND...

"Doesn't you think it's about time you built him a new one?"

Heck there is precious little in civilization," he concluded, "to appeal to a yetinayhow."

Sir Edmund was not prepared to forecast either success or failure, and as it turned out so yeti obligingly turned up. However, during the expedition Hillary was told by a high-ranking lama, "There is a yeti skin in the village."

This was Khampang, and the relic was found to be in the house of a frightening old woman believed to be a witch. The skin had been in the village for 240 years and was venerated as a good luck charm. Sir Edmund had great difficulty in getting it out, because the old woman said she would bewitch the village if it left.

Eventually Hillary took it under three conditions that he and his party gave a donation to the village monasticity, that they permitted one of the headmen to accompany the robe, and that they gave a donation towards the new village school. The final stipulation was that if they had not returned before a fixed date, three Sherpas with the explorer would forfeit their lands.

So after every villager agreed by vote, the sacred object — looking something like a small leather tunic with ginger and black bristly hair — was loaned to agents for inspection. Khampang Chumbi, a village headman, went as the guardian of the

robe. It travelled to Chicago, to Paris and London for inspection by anthropologists, anatomists and zoologists.

At Buckingham Palace, Queen Elizabeth was allowed to look at it, and she received from the headmen the gifts of some goat's milk butter (ago is not deemed delectable to the food in Nepal and Tibet, too, and a fly-whisk made from the tail of a yak. As for the skin, it was claimed to be that of a fox or a goat, and even the hair seemed to have been woven on.

Despite this setback, the yeti still seems to be wanted. The job is to pin him (if that is the right word) down. The most circumstantial account fairly recently came from the well-known British mountaineer, Donald Whillans, in 1970. He reported seeing a creature on the mountain side which the Sherpas with him said was a baby yeti.

Whillans told how as he lay in his tent one moonlit night he saw some object moving in the shadow. He could make out the arms and legs of the object, which went right across a snow ridge of a height of 12,000-13,000. It looked like something between a bear and a gorilla.

As long ago as 1897 a traveller mentioned strange tracks in the Himalayan snows, but not surprisingly more detailed reports of the so-called Abominable Snowman

ON THE TRAIL OF THE YETI

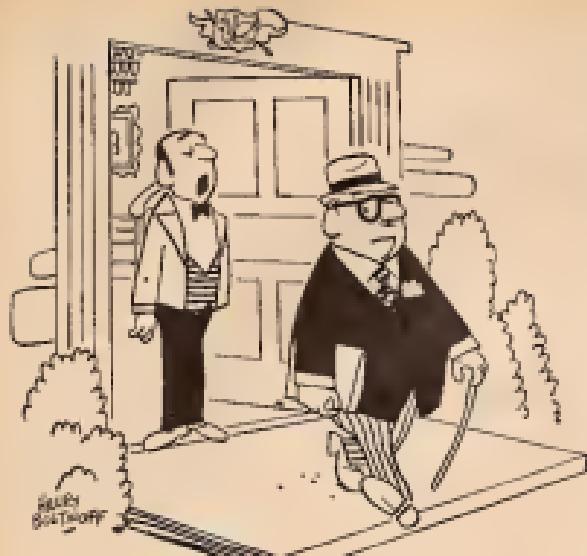
Continued from page 17

"As no one has ever been here before, the yetis will be very frightened tonight by our arrival." I was relieved by this assurance."

So far, although the presence of yetis has been so often reported, nobody has yet succeeded in capturing one of these elusive creatures. The leader of the American expedition said on setting out, "We are 100 percent conservation-minded, and we would in no case take a yeti unless a population study showed that they could stand the loss of an individual."

Moreover, as Sir Edmund Hillary said, and laughed, at a Press conference in Kathmandu, "The Nepalese Government does not allow the export of yeti."

A dozen years back Sir Edmund led an unsuccessful quest for the yeti. The plan was to "shoot" any one sighted with a firearm loaded with a hypodermic syringe charged with a harmless knock-down drug to get it to sleep temporarily. Sir Edmund said that if he were successful in his hunt, after examination he would let the passenger go. "I



"Don't forget to ask your boss for that raise today, Sir. You've four weeks behind in my salary."

began to reach the western world only after mountaineers began to penetrate the upper slopes of the Himalaya. It was Lt-Col C. E. Howard-Bury, in his account of the 1921 reconnaissance of Mount Everest, who first introduced the tangible creature to western readers.

He recounted how, to the north-east of Hissar, at a height of 11,000 feet, on the Latsa Pass, among the tracks of hares and foxes he came across one impression "that looked like a human foot".

He thought it was probably caused by a wolf, but the career with him at once proclaimed it to be that of "The Wild Man of the Snow", to which they gave the name of Yetzokkang, the Abominable Snowman — who from then on was secure of his place in literature, if not in science.

In an article which Colonel Howard-Bury telegraphed to England, he told of having seen the footprint of the Wild Man of the Snow. He put three exclamation marks behind the statement to dissociate himself from any such belief that the account served at its destination without these qualifying marks, as the first published report of the Abominable Snowman appeared more factual than its author intended.

Four years later an Indian ex-

plorer, a Tombazi, was climbing in Sikkim in the eastern Himalaya. He had this to say about his experiences: "About 16 miles from the Zemu glacier, wild-gorilla-like porters began to attract my attention. Some 600 ft down the valley was an object around their campsite. The shape resembled that of a human being, walking upright and completely naked. The creature was apparently busy plucking roots. After a few minutes it disappeared."

"Upon closer investigation I found that the foot imprints definitely showed the contours of five toes. No human being had been seen wandering in this direction for a year."

Tombazi's report received scant attention until in 1936 another explorer, Robert Kaulback, found similar tracks at 15,000 ft in the Salween area. Almost at the same time an RAF officer traversing the Nanda Devi region, the central mass of the great mountain range, claimed that he had spotted similar tracks.

Over the years similar reports have come from other parties. In fact, there is no more persistent legend among these rocky heights than that of the yet. Nobody who has travelled for any length of time in the "Abode of the Snow" could fail to hear the story, in various guises, which comes out of India, Nepal and Tibet.

One of the most remarkable incidents was related in 1937 by Dr A. G. Probin, a senior scientist of the Geographic Scientific Research Institute of Leningrad University. At the time he was in the Pamir Mountains, from which radiate the Kunlun, Hindu Kush, Karakoram, Tien-shan, Pamir, and Himalaya ranges. He was leading the hydrological section of the International Geophysical Year Joint Expedition of the Uzbek Academy of Sciences and Leningrad University.

Dr Probin and his had heard reports of snow creatures being seen in these mountain areas, but never expected to see one himself. However, when on the Fedchenko Glacier, some 10 yards above him he saw a figure moving on the mountain side.

At first he thought it was a bear, but "having collected myself it became clear to me that this was no bear, but a human-like creature. It walked on its legs, slightly bent forward. It wore no clothing and its body was covered with thick, reddish-brown hair. I could not make out whether it was male or female".

Perhaps the most notable story relating to the yet is the one attributed to another celebrated mountaineer, Mr Frank Smythe, fellow-sheriff with Eric Shipton in his experience. "The Snowman is reputed to be large, fierce, and carnivorous. The large ones eat yaks and the small ones men. The Snowman is sometimes white and sometimes black or brown. Even to see him means death."

Towards the end of 1937 he set out to explore a previously unvisited glacier-filled valley. He was accompanied by three trustworthy, intelligent Tibetans, all skilled climbers. One morning at 14,500 ft, Smythe saw before him some tracks which he first took to be those of a man.

On coming up to them, however, he saw the imprint of a huge foot — apparently that of a biped — and in length of stride closely resembling his own tracks. When the three porters joined him one and all declared that the tracks had been made by a Snowman. Smythe started to make measurements and take photographs, but the porters hurried together in their excitement which in the Tibetans means fear.

As he believed he was the first European ever to have photographed such tracks, Smythe spared no pains to make a complete record. On the level the footmarks appeared 12 in. to 13 in. in length and six inches in breadth, but uphill they averaged

only eight inches in length though the breadth was the same.

The single was one and a half feet to two feet of the level, but considerably less again, and the footmarks were turned outwards at about the same angle as a man's.

Through his glasses Saythie was able to follow the tracks as they descended a steep rock face fully 1000 ft. high covered with snow and ice. Next they went down a small but considerably crevassed gully, and Saythie was much impressed by the difficulties overcome and the intelligence displayed in negotiating them.

Saythie turned round and followed the tracks the other way. They came to the mouth of a small cave under some slabs. He was then alone and cut off from sight of the porters by snow, and he could not altogether repress a ridiculous feeling that perhaps after all they were right.

Saythie said he was ashamed to admit that he stood at a distance from the cave, and threw a lump of rock into it before vanishing further. Nothing happened, so he looked into its mouth. There was nothing in there, so the enigma was resolved. It remains so to this day.

In the long ago, say the Sherpas, they and the yaks breed happily side by side among the great heights. Then came the time when the yaks took a sudden fancy to date off Sherpa flock. This was too much even for ancient friendship to put up with, and an aged monk put forward a plan whereby the yaks might be exterminated.

Great basketfuls of dung, the highly explosive Sherpa drink, were taken to a certain spot particularly thick with yaks. Then, from a distance, the yaks were treated to the entertaining spectacle of the Sherpas saying about one another with voices half off, apparently, by dust.

In reality they were "fighting" with wooden swords. At nightfall Sherpas rose to their feet, picking up their wooden weapons, and replacing them with razor-sharp steel on as within easy reach of the yaks. With daylight the yaks fell to gorging the fence end-wise until they became fighting drunk. They finally exterminated themselves, burning one survivor, who was duly despatched by the monk himself.

Not a very likely tale, and the survivor of many similar stories. But the Sherpas say that a small number of yaks were not present on that fatal day, and it is the descendants of these which still hover the high passes of the Himalayas. And maybe they do.

THE BIGGEST THIEF IN THE WORLD

Continued from page 24

He found backers, and the project was successful. The capital of Swedish Match was doubled in 1922, and then came the International Match Company with a capital of \$120 million.

The shaky economic condition of half the countries of the world gave Krueger his real opportunity. Fantastic as it may seem, the credit of the private individual was better than that of the Governments of France, Germany, Holland, Belgium and many other countries.

Where these countries could not borrow on the international market,

or only at a fantastically high rate of interest, Krueger could get all he wanted, cheaply and lend them the money. He conceived the brilliant idea of making loans in return for match monopolies. France (\$100 million), Poland (\$55 million), Romania (\$30 million), Turkey (\$72 million) and half a dozen other countries obtained loans in 1923-6.

The Krueger loans seemed bottomless, and all the time shareholders received dividends sufficient to make half the world come running to him with its money to invest. With a loan of \$120 million to Germany in 1930, there passed nothing which Krueger could not do.

And the blind confidence which the financiers had in Krueger was

CLASSIFIED ADS



"Boss wanted preferably in the thirties, handsome, college graduate with a past record of success. Good opportunity for the right employer."

such that he got away with bonds so crudely forged that even the signature on one of them was afterwards found to be wrongly spelt! The truth was that nobody tried to look.

What did he spend his money on? From the appalling crudity he left, which took years for the accountants to disentangle, it was obvious that he personally got rid of \$123 million spent on pleasure alone. He earmarked a fortune to maintain a private barge speeded out in all the big cities and resort towns of Europe and the U.S.

The sale of very substantial amounts of Krueger securities on the very morning of his death gave rise to the rumor that his suicide had been a fake and that he had sailed away great sums. The experts investigating his demise said that when Krueger saw the end coming he might have sold securities and bought gold at a high price with the idea of "disappearing" — and the gold may still be unclaimed today in some safe deposit.

Such was the temple he left behind that no one ever really discovered when the taking of balance sheets began. But over the course of years it is clear that the net earnings of his companies were less than 2 percent, whereas he was paying dividends of 5, 7 and even 10 percent.

Only once was Krueger caught — and that killed him. In 1930 the world was convulsed with economic troubles. Krueger found it im-

possibly hard to get the credits granted to cover his true activities. He thought up a coup that would save him.

He acquired control of the Eriksen Company, and put forward to the International Telegraph and Telephone Corporation of America the idea of a monopoly. They took him on the board and put up \$10 million for the Eriksen company.

A fall in the price of Eriksen shares made the chairman of ITT nervous. He started a probe of the Eriksen balance sheets and discovered that the assets were little better than wind. The "cash" was a debt from Krueger, the assets were nothing more than claims on other companies. Krueger, in fact, had taken \$13 million from Eriksen and mortgaged another \$12 million.

The Indian banks on which his advisers urged him to make money were forged — valuable only so long as they remained in his safe. Krueger knew the end had come. He returned to Paris, where by now the creditors were waiting like anxious vultures.

A dozen men, representing the interests of millions, arranged to meet him for execution. He didn't appear at the appointed time. They waited. The hours passed and they became anxious, and then a call to his room confirmed their suspicion. Unable to face them, the biggest thief and swindler of all time had blown his brains out.

AUSTRALIA'S FIRST WAR FLYERS Continued from page 32

The ankles saw the observer wave at them from the cockpit, and then a small packet fell to the gunboat's deck. The *Shorthorn* circled while the observer waved again, then flew away south towards Basra.

General Townshend had his headquarters aboard the gunboat *HMS Raspigal*, and when a naval officer gave him the message Captain White had thrown he acted upon it immediately. Black smoke belched suddenly from the little warship's funnel, and sailor engineers worked up to full speed as she steamed out into mud-strewn.

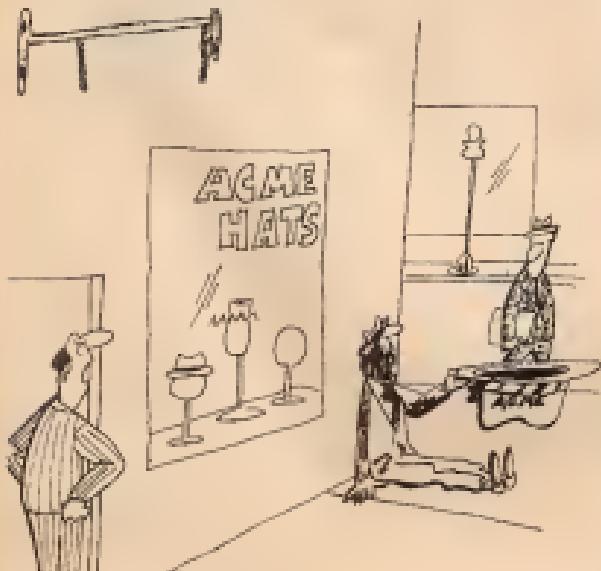
Soon after midnight that night, *HMS Raspigal* steamed into Anzali — more than 100 miles up the river from Basra. By this time Townshend was well in advance of his own advancing army, in the heart of enemy-held territory. But with the 22 men on board standing ready at the Count's light guns, he was able to Huff the Turks in the town into surrender and hold them there until the leading Indian troops arrived next day.

So the first stage of the British advance up the Tigris was a great success. Thanks mainly to the Australian aviators' efficient reconnaissance work, Townshend had been able to advance much farther than he had dared hope beforehand. Two Turkish gunboats were sunk in the battle, and 17 guns and nearly 2000 prisoners were captured.

The successful advance enabled a landing-ground to be made on an island in the Tigris River near Kurna. Now the Half Flight's machines did not have to burn up so much petrol flying to and from Basra — they operated from Kurna in the daytime, then flew back down to Basra each evening with Townshend's despatches to be cabled back to India.

For administrative reasons, the Australian pilots were given commissions in the Royal Flying Corps and seconded to the Indian Army. The two Indian Army pilots took over the overall control of air operations, keeping most of the flying to Petri and his men. A brick workshop for the overhaul of engines and the manufacture of spare parts was built by Arab labor at Basra, an iron hanger was erected and powerplants were brought from India.

The consolidation of the army's administrative air arm proceeded slowly, because of the intense heat and the risk of sunstroke. The



average temperature at Basra during the months June, July, August and September, 1915, was 103 degrees in the shade. Every morning, parades and work began at 3 am and continued until 9 am. Then there was a long rest, and work started again at 4 pm and went on into the night.

The Nigerian Farness, Shorthorn and Longhorns needed a lot of maintenance work to keep them flying. They were gawky pusher biplane types with box-kite wings, and their wooden frames and fabric skins decayed quickly in the Mesopotamian heat and damp. These 90-hp Renault engines were second-hand, and also needed a lot of care.

It was fortunate for the Australians that there were no enemy aircraft as that theatre of war, as it would have been difficult to find any sort of aircraft which had a lower performance than the Farness and yet was still capable of flight. The dangers involved in a forced landing due to engine failure were enough to worry about. In addition to the danger of dying of thirst, the marauding Arab bands which prowled the desert outside the battle zone were likely to kidnap downed pilots for ransom or cut their throats for sport.

On July 4, two new aircraft arrived at Basra - French-built Caudron biplanes, with 80-hp engines. The Australians looked them over and decided that they appeared to be very frail for operational use in such a hostile climate. But at least they were somewhat faster than the Farness, which were liable to fly backwards when they were landed into a high wind.

The Caudrons arrived just in time for the next British offensive, which opened on July 6. After Petrie and Barn, in one Shorthorn and Ruffy and Treloar in the other had made preliminary reconnaissances, Indian infantry attacked and overran the Turkish position at Sub-el-Shaykh.

Major Ruffy and Lieutenant More then flew the two Caudrons up from Basra to Korna. The next British target was the town of Nasiriyah, and Ruffy and More flew over in one of the Caudrons and inspected the Turkish trench system there before the attack was made on July 24.

The Gnome rotary engines of the Caudrons gave a lot of trouble over the desert, as they were un-cooled and the high temperature cut their efficiency. On July 24 Ruffy made a flight over the battlefield in one Caudron, and had to make a forced landing when the engine failed over the town. He glided very northwards to get the machine down in the



"Now, remember, if you're ever at the rescue station in References, be sure and look me up."

food-writers near Sub-el-Shaykh, where the Indian garrison helped him save it.

More was to follow. On July 26 Ruffy and More had to fly their Caudrons back to Basra for maintenance. They agreed to keep close together in the air for safety in case of a forced landing, but in the event they soon became separated. The faltering rotary engines forced each pilot to fly a different path.

Ruffy's Caudron suffered a recurrence of its previous trouble, and he was forced to land in the river about half-way between Nasiriyah and Basra. Luckily, the Arabs in the area had been very impressed by the success of British victories along the river. They did not molest Ruffy, and the sergeant-mechanic who flew with him managed to take the engine into his arms. Ruffy was able to take off again and finish the flight to Basra.

But More and Barn, in the other Caudron, were never seen again. Their engine failed a few miles past the point where Ruffy went down, and More glided down to a landing in the open desert. Before they had a chance to try to repair the engine, they were attacked by a band of Arabs.

Like all the other machines in Mesopotamia at that time, the Caudron carried no machine-guns. More and Barn straddled on foot in the direction of the railway station at Abu Salibiq. Armed only with their service revolver, they held off the Arabs in a running fight.

After killing one Arab and wounding five others in a five-mile chase, one of the officers was wounded. His companion stayed to fight beside him, and the Arabs killed them together. Search parties were sent out, but no trace of their bodies was ever found. Ruffy found the remains of the Caudron, broken in mid-air by the Arabs, while on a special reconnaissance a few days later, and the rest of the story was pieced together from reports by friendly Arabs.

Captain White, on behalf of the AFC, accompanied a British punitive-expedition which searched the country by Arab villages for the murderers. But these men had fled, and the soldiers found none of the dead airmen's property in the villages. Eventually they burnt the houses of the local Sheikhs, in retribution and as a warning.

The loss of Lieutenant More in particular was a hard blow to the officers and men of the Field Flight. He was only 23 when he died, having abandoned a very promising career as a doctor in Melbourne for a wild career of adventure in the air. Only a few hours before his death he had spent a hard night tending the wounded in the hospital at Nasiriyah.

More might have achieved renown as a doctor even more after this war, or he might have reached high rank in the RAAF had he chosen to stay in uniform. But now he has only one claim to fame. Of more than 10,000 young Australian flyers who have died in four wars, he was the first

For two months after the capture of Naumyeh the pilots and ground crews of the Half Flight struggled against the heat and the force of the "dakota" wind to maintain their machines in flying trim. On August 24 more reinforcements arrived — four single-seater Martinsydes scours. But their performance, too, was disappointing in the heat. Peete tested one at the air on August 29, and it took 25 gallons of petrol and 23 minutes to climb to 7000 feet — and once it was up there, its best speed was only 50 miles an hour.

The next projected stage in Townsend's advance was an attack on the town of Kut-al-Amara. The army's air component — now manured by a flight of spotters and recceing and No. 20 Squadron, RFC — was moved upstream again in support. A Shortbore was used for a photographing attempt at aerial photography over Kut, but the only available printing-paper was useless. The airmen relied on visual reconnaissance when the attack went forward.

Townshend's Indian troops were another brilliant tactical success. A cavalry force turned the Turkish flank, and a bayonet charge drove them back in a rout. They lost heavily in killed and prisoners, and left 15 guns behind. By October 3, 1915, Townsend's pursuing advance guard was half-way between Kut and Baghdad.

By now there was a growing shortage of aircraft in the new squadron. The spotters found it difficult to operate from the river, and the pursuing Caudron and the Longhorn were normally out of action for one reason or another. Thus two of the new Martinsydes

were wrecked in crashes, and the Caudron forced-landed behind the Turkish lines. Lieutenant Trilock and his observer were taken prisoner. Now only Peete and White were left of the original pilots of the Half Flight.

White had a narrow escape soon afterwards, when he was flying over the Turkish defences at Ctesiphon. His Parasite's engine began to misfire badly, and he was forced to land well behind the enemy lines. There was no time to repair it — but it was still developing enough power to tax the machine, though not enough to get off the ground.

Sooner than surrender outright, White decided to try to tax back towards the British lines. With his observer, Captain F. C. Yester-Brown of the Indian Army, standing in the cockpit to guide him and fight off pursuit with a rifle, he started up and rolled away in a cloud of dust.

The Parasite ran before the wind for 15 miles, over scrubland and ridges, around rock outcrops and canopied scrub. The crippled machine spluttered past the 2000 Turkish cavalry encamped at Ktesiphon, and through a gap in the bushes went along the front line. The cantankerous Renault engine then picked up power again, and White lifted off and flew the rest of the way home.

White and Yester-Brown made a good team. A few weeks later, they located a line of enemy field batteries by flying down over the guns as though they had been hit. At 1000 feet they pre-pointed the guns, throttled and ran low home as the Turks ran through the mass.

But on November 13 their luck came to an end. They endeavoured to fly out in the Longhorn and cut the enemy's communications by landing outside Baghdad and blowing up a line of telegraph poles. The Longhorn was damaged on landing, and when Yester-Brown blew down two of the posts the fallen wire fouled its wings. He and White were captured by the Arabs and handed over to the Turks.

A week later Townsend's army began the battle for Ctesiphon. But now, at last, the tide turned against them. Unknown to Townsend the enemy had been heavily reinforced, and although the Indian troops captured Ctesiphon they were unable to hold it. Townsend withdrew to Kut, and was besieged there with about 13,000 men.

Peete, the last of the AFC pilots, flew the last of the Half Flight's Shortboreas at Ctesiphon. When the siege of Kut began, 3 Squadron was ordered to withdraw down the river.

With its meagre collection of semi-serviceable aircraft, the squadron then embarked on the first major military air-lift in history. Peete formed a plan to use the aircraft to carry vital stores across the Turkish lines to the beleaguered garrison.

The squadron's efficient new BE2c aircraft could each carry two 50-pound sacks of grain at a time slung under the lower wings. Peete loaded tightly-filled sacks made from cotton sacks, so that when the former burst on landing the latter stopped the grain from scattering.

Nine members of the original Half Flight who were left in Kut created rails to grind the grain, and 70-pound malt-stores were dropped in by home-made parachutes. The machines also dropped wireless parts, rifle cleaners, medical supplies, money, mail and tobacco.

But it was all in vain. The 19,000 pounds of food which the aircraft dropped in 14 sorties did not go far among 13,000 men. German aircraft appeared in Mesopotamia at last and began to cooperate with the supply drop, and on April 29, 1916, Townsend finally surrendered. Seven of the nine Australians in Kut later died in Turkish captivity, though White and Trilock survived.

Captain Peete and the mechanics left back at Basra were the only survivors of the AFC's Half Flight. After the fall of Kut they were recalled to Egypt to join the newly-formed first all-squadron of the AFC. Peete was later transferred to the RFC in England, where he became a test pilot and later commanded a training squadron. *



"The little boy followed him home, and now he wants to keep him!"

SUB HERO'S LAST COMMAND

continued from page 33

Gilmores was relying on poor visibility to make a stealthy attack.

But the target ship was half the distance, and twice as close. And apparently, some of the Japanese crew had vision almost as sharp as London Down. The Growler had just worked her way into a favorable firing position. Range below 2000 yards, angle on the bow, 130 degrees starboard. Then a lookout on the 900-ton supply ship Hayasaki spotted her.

The Jap skipper had no illusions about successfully evading a submarine. Her 50 caliber machine gun and 3-inch deck gun might be enough to hold off a surface attack, but once the American slid under the waves, it would just be a matter of time. The Hayasaki's skipper rapped commands. Obediently, he would reverse about and ploughed at top speed on collision course with the surfaced sub.

Seven men were on the Growler's bridge. But visibility had worsened. No one saw the target ship turn until too late. The radar scope below detected the Hayasaki's change of course, but then time had run out for launching torpedoes.

"Here she comes!" bawled Ensign Edward "Red" Williams, and Ensign Bill Kotley, one of the three lookouts, yelled, "The bastard's gonna ram!" The Jap freighter had located out of the darkness off the starboard bow and was bearing down on them at full speed.

"Left full rudder!" Gilmores rounded down through the hatch to the helm station and sounded the collision alarm. As the sub turned hard left at 18 knots the enemy freighter charged on a swell and came crashing down, her grinding weight crunching 18 feet of Growler's bow at right-angles to port and buckling a further 30-feet of it like cheap card-board.

The Growler lurched and rolled. Lieutenant Commander Schade somersaulted from the compass tower to the control room deck and nearly knocked himself senseless. Up on the bridge, Gilmores grabbed the rail and heaved himself to his feet.

The collision had started up waves which surged over the sub's rolling hull and drenched the bridge with spray. Gilmores shook his head clear in time to see the Jap crew roasting frantically to bring their deck guns to bear.

As the lookouts suddenly rocked apart on the rising swell, the Hayasaki's machine gun opened up,

bullets clanging against polymers. Gilmores swept a glance about him, at these lookouts, the quarter master, his two deck officers. "Clear the bridge," he shouted. "All hands below!"

They had no choice but to dive fast. Davies and the quartermaster whipped through the hatch. At the foot of the ladder Davies glanced over his shoulder up the stairs, but nobody was following him. Instead someone topside shouted "Oh, God, I'm hit!"

The quartermaster scuttled back up, reached through the hatch and felt around in the dark. His hand closed on a writhing body — one of the lookouts, moaning. The machine gun still cracked the ribs, bullets spangled and whined off bridge and compass tower. The quartermaster dragged the lookout down through the hatch.

Throughout the ship men waited for the familiar blaring signal for

driving ... shooches ... shooches. And still it didn't sound.

The quartermaster again groped around the blacked-out bridge. He dragged a second wounded lookout safely below. Commander Schade grabbed the ladder rungs and pulled up. "Captain?" He paused. "Howard?"

On the blood-and-spray-washed bridge, Ensign Red Williams' bullet-ridden body slumped over the rail. Commander Gilmores blanked at it, momentarily forgetting his own wounds. Painfully he strode to crawl to a second lifeless body, Ensign Bill Kotley.

Gilmores stretched both hands to the slippery rail, managed to draw himself upright. He rubbed the red film from his eyes and saw that the Jap ship had backed off some distance as her gunners could bring their deck cannon to bear. If that happened, Gilmores knew it would be the end.

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A spasm of coughing seized the Commander. He felt his life ebbing. But his mind was still sharp. It would take precious minutes to carry him below — minutes during which a major round from the Jap three-inch might puncture the Growler's pressure hull. He had to reach the hatch. "Anne," he gasped. "Anne, take her down."

The roar of wind and sea and machine gun drowned his feeble voice. When he tried again his mouth filled with blood. He spit it out and concentrated all his strength into a final effort. This time the command rang loud and clear to the men below. Loud, clear and unforgetable: "Take her down, Schade. TAKE HER DOWN!"

On hearing the skipper's voice, Schade had made an instinctive move to reach topgall. But that would have been disastrous. Schade had his orders. Take her down. For a tortured fraction of a second he fought his own inner battle, but his duty was to the sub and her crew. Sick at the sound of it, Schade kept his voice steady enough to issue the order.

There was no time for mounting. The Haymarket's 3-inch shells screamed incendiary over the already diving sub, but a machine-gun bullet ripped through the conning tower and as the submerged water spouted down into the control room, soon half a dozen of water flooded about the deck.

Holding the Growler submerged, Schade dawdled first, temporary repairs. No one mentioned the Old Man during those moments but he was on everyone's mind. No one panicked, no one gripped and in half an hour the flood was under control. Only then did Schade address all hands and explain what had happened. The Lord's Prayer was said for the three lost men and then the Growler surfaced.

"For distinguished gallantry and valor above and beyond the call of duty . . ." And the citation for the Congressional Medal of Honor, posthumously awarded. Commander Howard Gilmore ended this way: "In his final living moments, Commander Gilmore gave his last order: 'Take her down!' The Growler diving seriously damaged but under control, she was brought to port by her well-trained crew inspired by the courageous fighting spirit of their dead captain."

The sub sank a further 8000 fms under Commander Arnold Schade and 3000 fms under Schade's successor. She submerged in the Formosa Straits area on November 8, 1944, and failed to return.

THEFT FROM THE CYCLOPS BUDDHA

Continued from page 12

Her lips were pink-dabbed.

Ebbing felt sheepish when he reached her side. "Chacon papparamee (Glad to meet you)," he implored.

"We can speak English," she said. Her name was Ema and she was an actress, or hostess, at the OB President Beer Hall a block from Seoul's Sejong Hotel. A college girl, serving beer and lots of sex every night, she worked in a haze zone between waitress and prostitute and was now rushing home to beat Seoul's midnight curfew.

Any American in Seoul who owned a vehicle could take his pick of women, because those he interview couldn't get off the streets by curfew time without help and if caught outside after midnight they faced heavy fines. Ebbing liked this girl and told her that he had a jeep. It was her idea that they go to his apartment.

Ema was barefoot, sultry but sensible, a quick-headed girl who was amused that American's found her exotic. She had a wild streak, and she and Ebbing lit it off immediately in her apartment, the made a tone of the preliminaries, stripping down to panties and bra, then strutting around in the moonlight from outside, letting him up alongside and study the bronzed, taut firmness of her body.

When they made love, she gave and demanded everything. It was starkly physical, almost a contest of endurance, and she was very inventive. Satisfied was illustrating his bedroom before she heaved a heavy sigh of contentment and slept.

Mike Ebbing didn't go to work that day or the next. Neither of them ventured outdoors. In fact, never left his bedroom.

Ema was a scrappy, argumentative young gal who'd studied jewellery-cutting in school and who frankly admitted that she planned for the glittering, expensive things in life. Shortly after their mutually compatible physical relationship began, she talked Ebbing into skipping work again and taking her for a three-day vacation down to the Bopchusa Temple Grounds in remote mountains 70 miles south of Seoul.

Here, the couple registered as "Mr and Mrs" at a country ryegwan (inn) and continued their intense love making. They were walking around the silent, brooding temple ground one morning when Ema peered up at the gleaming green eye of the huge

Buddha. "Imagine the pleasure we could have if we owned something like that," she said.

Ebbing and his gal explored their stay for several days while he studied the statue and its emerald eye from all directions. He found a local workman who'd helped repair the emerald 10 years earlier and learned that the adhesives holding it in place, battered by weather, was due to be replaced soon. He studied the patterns of the National Police Guards and learned that they patrolled the grounds only sporadically.

Mike Ebbing probably didn't know himself when he crossed the thin dividing line between playing with his ideas and seriously planning to steal the emerald. But it's possible he might never have tried his daring theft except for what happened to him when he returned to Seoul.

He was fired from his job.

"No way" snorted Mr. Mike."I apologize to Valdez. "It's not that you're drunk half the time and don't come to work. It's not that you've checked up with that hake the other half of the time and don't come to

work either. But the company just isn't making any money. Mike, so I've got to let you go."

Ebbing spent the next week in a rock quarry on the outskirts of Seoul, learning how to "trapped" down the face of a cliff with ropes and tackle. Once, he took a 40-foot fall without breaking anything. Shaken, he picked himself up and tried again.

Rehearsing his "human fly" act on an abandoned quarry was hard enough, but he knew it would be a thousand times harder when he went into action for real against the high face of the standing Buddha.

Ebbing made other preparations in a tiny city Seoul. It wasn't hard to find a "fixer", even for the costliest emerald in the region. He worked out a deal with a group of Koreans who travelled regularly to Japan whereby he would get 60 percent of whatever they could peddle the jewel for.

Ebbing also made certain that his passport and Ema's were brought up to date, and that he and the gal had the necessary immunizations and other documents for international



"I wonder how the mose ended?"

travel. He'd decided to burn his bridges with Korea and make a fast getaway.

Mike Ebbing intended to make his assault on the face of the "Cyclops" Buddha after the midnight curfew on May 5, 1972, a Friday. That day, they arrived at his Jeep at the village adjacent to the Bogachan Temple Ground and checked into the nearest inn.

It was the rainy season, which meant a minimum of tourists and others in the area, including police. They spent the early evening hours in their room alone. Afterward Ebbing looked down at the nude body of the girl beside him, wondering if he was making a mistake.

Midnight Ebbing unshod the lock on the temple gate with his hammer and coaxed his gear-laden Jeep up the narrow roadway to the base of the looming statue. The drizzle muffled his sounds and the dark, windblown temple ground felt empty, foreboding.

Ignoring his anxiety, Ebbing worked hasty in the downpour to ready his rappelling gear, swapping quick glances with the girl. It took him three tries to haul a loop up to the "crown" on the Buddha's head,

secure it, and begin pulling himself upward, hand over hand.

Ebbing's status-change was sheer physical torture. The unshackled rope gouged deep, bloody ruts into his hands and forearm. He kept slipping on the moist surface of the stone Buddha, several times nearly breaking free and falling. It took 43 grueling minutes to reach the crown atop the great cyclops head, and half an hour longer to swing out in front of the face and the emerald eye. All the time, a dizzying line of bright preyed on him and the rain pounded into his face, blinding his vision.

A routine, truck-borne patrol of National Police caught Ebbing in his "human fly" maneuvering at the worst possible moment, just as he was pulling the emerald free from its mount and jamming it into his pocket.

The police were tough professionals, trained to use only as much force as necessary, and their actions were decided by Ebbing himself, who first looked toward them with disbelief, then came scurrying down the side of the statue, and finally grabbed the girl and started running.

While Ebbing was outlined in the

glare of their spotlights, the police closed in slowly and methodically. When he dragged the girl away from the yellow beam into darkening shadows, they charged. And when Ebbing climbed into his Jeep, they began shooting wildly, their muzzle flashes stabbing like pinpoints of fire, their bullets crunching into the thin metal skin of his vehicle.

"Hang on and stay low!" Ebbing screamed at the girl. Fumbling with the gun, he started the jeep just as a spray of gunfire shattered the windshield in front of him, bombarding the pair with shards of flying glass. Something grazed the side of his neck, drawing blood, while he floorboarded the Jeep and shot forward.

The rear of the police truck was sticking out into the road! Several leaping policemen, charging with their weapons at point-blank, were caught in front of Ebbing. The cop with the megaphone scolded for cover, shouting: "Stop running! Stop running or we will shoot to kill!"

At the last possible moment, the policemen on Ebbing's path darted out of the way as the jeep bore down on them. They triggered their weapons on full automatic.

Ebbing slammed into the police truck with dizzying force, hurling it aside in an ear-shattering shower of sparks. Suddenly, Ebbing and the girl were in the clear, hurtling downhill from the temple ground, leaving the police behind, bullets flying over them as they passed speed.

Ebbing handled the Jeep in frantic, desperate movements, keeping the headlights off, bouncing and shooting down the darkened roadway. "We've got the thing, Emi! We've got the emerald!"

"They'll catch us, Mike. We must hide! Let's leave the Jeep!"

"No. No, I don't think so! Those cops didn't have a side and we knocked out their truck! Listen, Emi, I think we can make the four-hour drive to Kimpo Airport and get a commercial flight out of this country before they catch up with us."

The moon came out, when he reached the divided, four-lane Penn State highway and turned north. Emi just stared at him silently as he increased speed to 70 mph. It was 7:11 a.m. There was a Northwest Orient Airlines flight leaving Seoul's Kimpo Airport at 7:30.

To the girl's amazement, no police vehicles appeared on the empty road behind them as winds howled in the night. For more than two hours, Mike Ebbing drove toward Seoul



They left the highway at 3:30 am as the outskirts of the capital began to sprawl around them. And in the suburbs, with the first pink streaks of daylight lighting the sky above them, the jeep's engine coughed and sputtered. They came to a halt on an urban street beginning to fill with early morning passers-by — out of gas!

"Damn!" Ebbing thought aloud. The sunrise was over now. He didn't think he could make the airport in time.

He grabbed the girl's arm. They ran, shivering in wind that followed the sun, stumbling and leaning on each other for support. A maze of Korean architecture swallowed them up, and after a few moments they could hear only the clapping sounds of their own feet. They weren't being followed.

They emerged on a boulevard near the centre of the Yong Dong Po district. A trolley sat on the curb in front of them — an ancient, beaten-up '59 Plymouth.

"Mike! We have money! Plenty of money!"

Ebbing reached around the emerald in his pocket and came out with a wad of 500-won bills. "We've got cab fare and air fare, baby! All we need!"

She brushed a sigh of relief and they piled into the cab. The driver was a nervous young man with a mop of hair obscuring his eyes. He shivered at their soaked, ragged clothing and his indifference changed to a grin when Ebbing spotted four South Korean Air Force F-4D Phantoms taking off, their wings glinting against the sunrise.

"Can we reach the airbase terminal?" Ema asked.

"I think so, baby. We've got our passports and papers. We'll bluff our way aboard the flight."

"What about those fighter planes?"

"They aren't in communication with the police. They wouldn't mess with an airbase, anyway."

The new Kuspo terminal was several thousand yards from the airport gate, across a bleak and muddy stretch of unpaved road. They were approaching it when a National Police truck appeared in the rear-view mirror.

Ebbing stiffened. It was too late to wonder whether they were being chased because the cops had identified them or because the driver was exceeding the speed limit. The truck was gaining, pressing relentlessly closer to the old cab.

The driver followed Ebbing's unstricken hand until the cab was

giving to a halt in front of the commercial terminal — with the police truck still a quarter of a mile behind them.

"Maybe we can still outrun them!" Ebbing shouted. He and the girl dived into the building, their drenched clothing leaving pools of water on the linoleum floor of the place. They ran in an erratic zigzag sprint toward the Northwest ticket counter and when they arrived he had the money out. Through a plate-glass window, he saw the Northwest Boeing 707 warming up, one of the two mobile stairways already being withdrawn from its fuselage.

"We've got to get on that flight!" Ebbing gasped. "Damn it, we have to get to Tokyo right away!"

"I cannot sell you a ticket," the agent said flatly.

"What? Why not? I've got the money! Right here!" In a corner of one eye, Ebbing saw the police truck parking outside.

"The two of you have obviously been drinking," the agent said. "Further, you have been out in the rain. You are soaked from head to toe. Your clothing is a shambles. You have no baggage. You are obviously drunk, and it is against the rules of the International Air Transport Association to..."

"Damn it, I'll give you a hundred dollars top!"

"You do not understand..."

"I'll give you two hundred bucks!"

"You are too late," he shrugged. "The flight to Tokyo is leaving now."

* * *

Inspector Boagkyun Kim of the National Police offered each of them a cigarette. Ebbing accepted. They'd been given their uniforms, scraped and dry, to replace their drenched clothing. The inside of the police station was drab and musty, and the glistening \$373,000 emerald looked out of place, shining up at them from Kim's desk.

The inspector looked at them intently.

"You are free to go," he said.

Neither Ebbing nor Ema understood. Ebbing rose awkwardly. "What?"

"I said, you are free to go."

"You mean..."

"Master Ebbing, we have our emerald back and we have learned how to keep it properly guarded. Without it, you have nothing to gain by leaving this country where you have lived in comfort for years, and I think we can punish you most effectively by keeping you out."

"I see no reason why Korean taxpayers should bear the expense of keeping you in prison. We don't want your kind here and we don't want the woman, either. We shall arrange for both of you to be on the next Northwest Airlines flight for Tokyo, and you can consider yourself deported — never to be permitted to return."

The police inspector was true to his word. As this is written, Mike Ebbing and Ema are in Tokyo, where the American — minus his stolen emerald "eye" — is having a tough time getting settled.



"On the economy tour you fly to twenty three countries but you don't land in any of them."

THE LEAD NIGHTINGALE

Continued from page 22

Her blouse was torn and her white blouse gashed up and down with her raped breathing. I couldn't see any scratches or bruises, not yet. Perhaps I was in time.

I saw Big Lon at that moment.

He could have been praying. He was on his knees and his enormous hands were trapped under a log. I walked over to him and helped roll the log, both of our shoulders together, pushing and heaving until it slowly shivered away.

He staggered to his feet, stood there muting moaning noises in his throat, looking at his torn hands. The heavy timber must have shattered every bone.

He stumbled away, looking neither to right or left. I'll never forget the animal whimpering that came from out of him.

Quickly I tossed my jacket over Marma and steered her along a path. She was crying softly, but she wasn't hysterical. We didn't say a word and I took her to her home and stood looking at her. What could anyone say?

"Don't come in, Uncle Ralph,

please," she begged. "Leave it to me, will you?"

I headed off, not sure if I was doing the right thing. I kept inside my house as not to wake up Eds. What could I say to her, even?

Sleep wouldn't come. I was waiting Big Lon trapped by the log, his crippled hands. He'd never play a guitar again, that was for sure. And he'd find it hard to up and tear at women, too.

When I was a kid, treefalls were fairly common. Trees were seen and left to fall by their own motion, caught by the wind. A dangerous position.

Someone had remembered the tree-falling sit. It had happened exactly at the place where Carmen Chester had been sliced. But how had Big Lon been enticed to stand in just the right place at the right moment, and what had caused his ears to the rigging of the big tree before it fell?

I sat up, shocked. If Marma had opened her blouse and taunted and promised and held him long enough with the sight of her body, Big Lon wouldn't have seen anything else. He would only have heard her tantalizing words.

Marma would have seen her

mother's scars sometimes. Maybe Andy lacked the guts to tell her what happened to her mother, but Carmen could have taken her into confidence and told her all about Big Lon and his predilection for young, throbbing bodies. Carmen Chester and Marma could have easily arranged the tree fall between them. The tree could have been sawn through during the day and packed to hide the cut.

What had Marma said outside her home? "Leave it to her!" It was hard to accept the fact that she wasn't a child any more. And she had her mother's spirit as well as her looks. She was strong-willed and determined, with a will all of her own.

I lay down again. The women were close-mouthed. Who would ever guess? I couldn't be absolutely certain myself — except that it was just too much of a coincidence.

Lon would leave Mount Shasta now. Linda would take him away back to the city with his cruel hands broken beyond repair. But his golden larynx was still intact. Now he was quite harmless. Oh, how the women would laugh. After 19 years of watching a tree fall on the nightingale.

I closed my eyes, thinking of the golden wattle blowing in the wind.

ASHES OF VENGEANCE

Continued from page 44

"Just my luck that you followed me in Or—" Gil stopped abruptly, "—or did you expect trouble?"

"Yeah," Marshall gave him a twisted grin. "Something Durston said about a gal that you both used to be sweet on in Hard Rock. It's been my experience that partners fall out for two reasons, women or gold."

"That's the way it was." Gil couldn't understand how that store could post out so much heat. "Durston beat a shovel over my head. He left me for dead and saddled our gold back to Hard Rock. And the gal — did he tell you that she liked him with the gold better than me without the gold? Did he tell you that all three were gone when I got back to Hard Rock?"

Gil fashioned a twisted grin to match Marshall's. "He left me with a vow to kill him when we met next." Gil tried to ignore his stinging scalp-ear.

"All right," Marshall said, sitting down wearily, "you got it in for him. But how do you know that Durston attacked your wife or burned down your home? What makes you think she died in that fire?"

"Julie wouldn't leave the ranch — she wouldn't run away from trouble."

"More than likely she's running after trouble."

"What do you mean?" Gil demanded, his voice measured — not like the implication.

"I mean, if the fire wasn't an accident, she probably went after the guy to kill him."

"She wouldn't have left this," Gil pulled the fire-blackened derringer from his rocker pocket, tossed it on the table. "I gave that to Julie for protection. She wouldn't have left this." He tossed the gold chain and locket alongside the derringer. "Unless there was trouble. Durston probably took it from her —" Tom filled Gil's eyes, "— along with everything else. He probably left her unconscious — or worse, fired the house, and rode off."

With his eyes fixed on the damage, the gold chain and locket, Marshall said again, "Gil, I'm sorry. My sorry."

"You're sorry?" Gil's hand whipped his 45 from its holster. "Strange how sorry a man can get, especially when he's expecting to be on the deadly end of a 45. Well, you'll be sorry with your last breath."

Marshall coolly patted one side of his longhorn scimitar. "Tell me one more thing. How do you know Durston was at your ranch?"

"I found his dog, Wolf. He's in my ranch yard with a bullet hole in his head. Durston was there all right. I'll not rest until I see him dead."

"And you want to kill me because I stopped you yesterday afternoon? Because it's my job to enforce the law in Sundance?"

"No. Because you jailed me and gave Durston time to get Julie and burn down my ranch home."

"Where were your ranch hands?"

"Out on the range. Julie was alone. I can see her. I can see him —" Gil couldn't bear the sight of what his mind's eye saw, —ending on now, knowing he couldn't have hurt her more. You gave him the chance he wanted."

"Suppose I agree to track him down. Bring him back for trial?"

Gil could hardly believe his ears. This couldn't be Gil Marshall talking. "You bargaining for your life?"

"No. Trying to save you from becoming a killer. Son, I've killed as sheriff, and I don't like it — but those killings don't grow at me. Furtive killings never let me rest. Why do you think I spend so much time in this office?"

Marshall turned on to answer his own question. "It gives me a feeling of belonging. Son, we all need that. It keeps my mind about the other. So does this book." He patted the opened book on the table. "We all need that too."

"You can't live your life with words." Gil leveled his 45.

"Son, kill me and you'll be a wanted gunslayer. Let me tell you, a gunslayer's life is a short one. If a bullet doesn't get him, age does. Killers live mostly in stories told at the Poke O'Gold and other saloons. Stories told by real men who build the West, the men who live long enough to have something behind. Son, you don't know what it is to kill a man —"

"I'm going to find out, but I'll give you a chance to draw."

"Listen to me!" Marshall barked. "I know what I'm talking about. Everyone around knows I'm a reformed killer. I've killed more men than people remember. More than I can forget."

"I wake up in a cold sweat — wishing I hadn't slept long enough. I see faces with death twisting their features. I see my own evil crowding in the dark."

"The reformed Evans," Gil snarled. "The worst kind."

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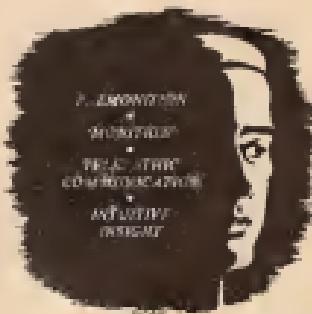
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"Ugh-ugh, the worst kind is the uniformed officer. Horrible though my dreams are, they are getting less horrible since I reformed. But they'll never be pretty."

He gave Gil a very smile. "Here I am prancing - while you're thinking for action. Let's go back to your ranch and wash those rums before you start throwing lead. Julie can take care of herself," he pointed to the fire-blackened doorway, "with or without that."

"She's no bigger than a mouse." There was a catch in Gil's voice. Marshall had made a mistake. He talking about Julie had honored Gil's need for revenge. "And I intended to see that she didn't have to take care of herself. Taking care of her was my job. You preventing me from doing my job. And for that, I'm going to kill you."

Marshall slapped both hands on the table in front of him.

Gil stared unbelievingly at the big man. By Marshall, corporal and now sheriff of Sandover. "You're yellow!"

Marshall nodded. "We're all yellow when we know we're wrong. I was wrong in holding you a jail until Duncan got out of town. What more can I say? I was doing the best I could. I thought Duncan was a harmless fugitive." His lips formed a conspiratorial grin. "All right, then!"

Gil looked at the old clock, calmly taking off Marshall's last seconds. Urging Gil on with this. Urging him after Duncan. He didn't care still good.

"Don't have me chasing here," Marshall backed. "Goddamn you, fire!"

Suddenly, Gil didn't want to fire.

always untied my gun."

Gil stared at him, open-mouthed, wide-eyed. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"Would you have believed me?" Marshall gave him a broad grin. "You'd have thought I was trying to save my life."

"Yeah, Sheriff - I guess so."

Marshall's gun faded. He eased his 45 cylinder back into place. In a flash it was leveled at Gil. "All right. Kimber Beach."

Grinned Gil slowly raised his hands. Marshall's lips twisted, then broke into another grin.

"That's to prove you can't trust anybody - I guess." He jammed his 45 into its holster and shoved out his hand. "I really don't know why I did that." He pushed back his helmet. "Manan, I do know. Lake a woman wants the last word, every gunman wants to have a showdown as top-draw."

It was too warm in here. Gil tanted the knob behind him and inched the door open. The cold air felt good on the back of his neck. Then he heard two horses run up outside.

He jerked around. Swung the door wide. He rushed across the porch and down the three steps. A wind-blown girl with cold-flushed face was astride the side horse.

"Julie!" She almost fell into Gil's arms.

He held her close, for a brief moment - until her shaking lessened. He raised her chin, brushed a tiny smid of honey blonde hair from her powdered face and watched her wide brown eyes fill with tears.

Her lips quivered. "Darling, I - I -" her voice broke, but she swallowed and rasped on barely, "I killed Joe Durstain."

She pointed to the second home. By Marshall was examining the dead, belly-saddled rider.

Joe sobbed. "I - I killed him." She turned her tear-stained face up to Gil. "He attacked me. We struggled - knocked over a stump. He grabbed at my shoulder. I fired. He died as he swung into his saddle. His dog came at me. I fired again." She sobbed against her husband's chest.

She went on brokenly. "It - it was too late to fight the fire. I saddled Brings, hoping I'd meet you."

"I went over Ridge Trail. The rains sent me back the same way - with kill in my heart." Gil said.

"John, you had to do it. I wish I had been there to do it for you."

Shoulder By Marshall had his hands on their shoulders. "I wish I had been there to do it for both of you."

Civil rights for early surfers

AUSTRALIAN SURFERS owe a lot to William H. Gocher, a Sydney newspaper editor at the turn of the century, who was the founder of the ban on them.

In Gocher's day, daylight and bathing were forbidden in most parts of Australia. Hours for surfing were restricted, and the less accepted surfers to swim in the early morning and to be out of the water by 8 a.m.

Gocher decided to test the power of this legislation. He surfed publicly at Manly Beach on three successive Sundays in September, 1902, as a challenge to the police and the courts.

Gocher was not arrested or charged on any of the days. He had an interview later with the Police Commissioner, and was able to win his point in the discussion.

After Gocher's stand, people were allowed to bathe freely in public at any time of the day. Since then, surfing in Australia has never looked back.

Marshall's glance dropped to his 45 on the table. He considered it a fit - as if he were about to grab for it.

"Put it in your holster," Gil ordered.

Without rising, Marshall's hand slowly reached for his 45 and slipped it into his holster. Again he placed his hands spread fingers on the table.

"You sitting or standing?" Gil demanded.

"I'm sitting - hoping you'll listen to me."

Gil shot a glance at the old clock in the corner. His numbers hid in the dim light, but it faithfully ticked off time. He was tired of waiting, tired of yearning, listening.

He tried to remember Julie's theory that killing - even in self-defense - is a devil's past. His aching soul-scarred goaded him.

"Stand up, Marshall!" Gil's heart started pounding again.

When Marshall got to his feet, Gil said, "Ready?" His hand flashed to his holster and came away with his 45.

He didn't want to kill this coxcomb who time had pushed beyond his prime. He wasn't going to fire. But it wasn't just that stopped him.

He saw that he himself had been wrong. By Marshall wasn't yellow - it takes a brave man to admit his mistakes. Marshall had guts. He was laying this out according to code. He didn't crack under stress and ask for pity. He didn't ask - he ordered. To the very end, he ordered - even his own death.

Gil knew what a wonderful thing he was experiencing. What a wonderful thing to tell her - but he'd have no children now that Julie was gone.

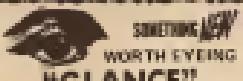
He dropped his 45 into its holsters. "Come on, Sheriff. I'm going to track down Joe Durstain. I need the law to make it legal."

"Son, I'm glad you did that."

Gil took off his Stetson, wiped the sweat from his forehead, and scratched his scalp-scar. "Come on."

"Sure. Wait until I load this." By Marshall had the cylinder out of his 45 and slipped in six bullets. He said sheepishly, "When I read my table, I

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YOU'VE GOT TO BE QUICK

Continued from page 60

It had started off badly for him, because surprise is always a distinct advantage. But he gradually took confidence, willing to grow stronger and more vicious as he realized the odds were against him.

Steves' brothers, three of them born hot-heads always at the ready to argue or fight, had given him the advantage of enhanced experience when it came to looking after himself. It had served him well, the rough apprenticeship of early teens.

At last he broke a gap in there and the net was easy. The little ended with him standing over them during them to continue.

One of his attackers was sitting up and groaning, his head in one hand and feeling for missed teeth with the other. Beside him, bent over a fence stretching dryly in agonizing heaves, was another dark form.

The third attacker was the one Macoy was interested in. He was holding on to the light post, his head bent forward as he gasped for breath, blood dripping from his mashed nose.

"You had enough?" Macoy panted, moving closer. "Or do you want to try me by yourself this time? I could handle a dozen like you three — no kidding!"

The other shook his head dolefully, wagging tentatively at his nose with the back of his hand. "I've had enough," he said thickly and he watched Macoy move still closer.

"Well I say," Macoy said harshly, trying to make his voice sound convincing. "I'm going to make an example of you, because you're the troublemaker." He dragged the man away from the post. "I feel sorry for your sister. You ought to do your own dirty work."

"No man!" the other said harshly. He swayed as he tried to break away. "We only meant to rough you up a little."

"You could have warned me. I'm going to teach you a lesson so that next time you might think twice about popping up on a stake." Macoy drew his fist back and hit him. It was a stinging blow really, just to emphasize his disgust and contempt.

"No! No more!" the other shrieked, stumbling away. "Don't hit me again!"

Macoy reached out and jerked him back again by his shirt. "All right then, we'll shake on it and forget it ever happened — that okay with you?"

The other nodded, confusion and

weariness in his eyes. He clutched out his arm hesitantly and they grasped hands.

"The girl's name," Macoy said softly. "I don't want you annoying her or hanging around her."

He turned and walked off. He didn't have to look back. He knew the three weren't interested in him any more.

He had no more trouble from any of them again, the banditade sailed on. They had both learnt something tonight. Would either of them know anything more from it?

In his own instance, he was surprised to realize that a fellow, no matter how good a worker he was or how smart and tough he thought he was, still had to depend on a woman sometimes — like getting a job for instance.

But that didn't really bother him because the more he thought about it he knew they were both only helping each other and he couldn't think of anything he enjoyed doing more.

THE UNSAFE SAFE

Continued from page 59

Inspector O'Hare stepped forward and shoved into the safe. Burke raised Curtis from the wheelchair.

The safe was empty.

"But it must be there," said Curtis, running his hand over the bottom of the safe.

"Of course it must be," said Hodgkiss, "and it is."

"Don't be bloody silly," said the Inspector. "It's gone. You can see that."

Burke lowered Curtis back into his chair.

"Well, if it's still there make it come back," said Curtis.

"Simple," said Burke. "But first I'd like to show you a small item we found in Manners' room." He drew from his pocket a small black, rubber object.

"What the hell is that?" said the Inspector.

"This is the business end of one of those suction cup arrows that children play with. I — or rather Mr. Hodgkiss and I — found it in the wastepaper basket in Manners' room."

"Well, what of it? What's that got to do with the theft of my diamonds?" said Curtis.

"Just cast your mind back a few hours, Mr. Curtis," said Burke. "Manners has just told you that the safe is empty. He picked you up and showed you the empty safe. You went out to the telephone in the hall and rang the police. Manners was in here all the time — alone. He simply

reached into the safe and with the suction cup pulled off the back wall of the safe this," said Donald, reaching into the safe, "and took out the diamonds."

Donald drew his right hand from the safe holding the book and his left hand holding the suction cup sticking to the tray.

"Just you took the tray out," said Curtis.

"I took a tray but," Donald said. "Two trays went in but only one came out. If you'd like to gather around I'll show you how it was done."

Donald again capped the two trays together, placed the book on the top-most tray, the one with the lipped edge, and placed trays and book on the bottom of the safe. He then picked up the book, slid the top tray out of the other tray and placed the book down on the bottom tray. He handed the top tray to the Inspector.

"I now push the book to the back of the safe," he said. "But I do it for pushing the bottom tray and raising it so I slide it backwards. Then, presto, the book is gone and the tray becomes the back wall of the safe, but at the same time it forms a small compartment as deep as one of its raised edges. Mr. Curtis had already noticed that the tray fitted perfectly from the point of view of width. What he didn't realize was that the bottom of the second tray — the one Manners kept in the kitchen on top of the refrigerator out of sight — was exactly the same dimensions as the back wall of the safe, and would form a perfect second wall containing the diamonds."

"Incredible," said Curtis.

"Very clever, Burke," said Inspector O'Han.

"Remarkable," said Hodgkins.

"Blast," said Manners, who had watched the demonstration unnoticed from the hall door.

"Have your blasted diamonds back," he said. "I never had a chance to get rid of them. Maybe things will go easier for me this way." He turned to Burke. "You're pretty smart for a copper," he said.

"Well," said Burke, "I know the diamonds had to be stolen at a time when the safe was open. It couldn't have been done when they were put away last weekend because Mr. Curtis watched the whole operation. And yet when the safe was next opened they seem to have vanished. But that was impossible because the safe had not been interfered with at the meantime. Therefore they had to be still in the safe."

"Then you know the safe had

been interfered with?" suggested Hodgkins.

"Yes, exactly," said Burke, picking up the thread again. "The safe had been blown. How could anyone interfere with the safe? There couldn't have been a secret compartment in the tray, but someone could have made one in the safe. It had to be Manners' work, and as soon as I saw these curious trays I knew exactly how he had done it. Finding the rubber suction cup in his room just had up the logic trail."

"Dad tells me you did some very clever detective work today," said Burke, pouring tea.

"Well, it wasn't so hard," said Donald Burke. "You know, things just fall into place like a jigsaw puzzle."

Hodgkins spluttered a mouthful of hot tea.

"Steady there," said Donald Burke. "Well, I'm going to have a hot shower and get in my pyjamas. It's been an exhausting day. Don't let anyone ever tell you that housework isn't as tiring as physical work."

When he had gone Curtis knew Hodgkins on the cheek. "Thanks, dad," she said.

"It wasn't easy, believe me," Hodgkins muttered.

STRIP FOR ACTION

Continued from page 29

It was a odd looking vehicle, the windscreen shattered with bullet holes, the stoopy search of some explosive spread across one side of the body. The engine whined and even above the engine note he could hear the bubble of the radiator.

The five men in it had a hunted, wolfish appearance. Their faces under the blue and white checked headcloths were gaunt and unshaven, their eyes bloodshot. There was fear in the set of their bodies as they crawled rather than sat in the command car as it rolled nearer to the spreading smoke of the burning plant.

They were only 30 feet from him as he eased his head forward with the pistol in it. His muscles began to tense as he prepared for action.

With the foliage so close he could not turn his head to where Nixon lurked in a jumble of rocks, behind him and halfway down the slope towards the plane. Inged lay 30 yards to his right among another such patch of thorn scrub, his clothes encrusted with sand till the bloodied totally into the desert.



"Let's see what kind of power it has on hills!"

Steve waited for the car to roll over the slope and down towards the wreck. When it was halfway down the slope Bizon's Uzi would spit 9 mm death and he would fire into the backs of the men in the car. It wasn't much of a plan but it could work.

He watched the car in trepidation as it came within 10 feet of him. And stopped.

The free man sat in half-rear and stood in the car staring down at the wreck. There was a fierce vindictiveness in the way they looked at the burning plane.

The Arab, manning the heavy machine gun, cocked it with a single abeyance. He looked down at the commander who sat beside the driver and spat harsh Arabic.

The commander had one of the long Arab faces, big lipped with slab-toothed teeth. Some magma showed on the carpet-like teeth he wore, but an air of authority sat on him and the magma was not necessary to make him as the leader. His large nostrils grunted humorlessly at the question and he nodded.

The heavy machine gun snarled thunderously. Tracer arched towards the wreck and the sun glinted on a spray of ejected cartridge cases. Two of the other Arabs raised their stubby, banzai-chopped Kalashnikov assault rifles and fired bursts in the direction of the plane.

Steve lay in the shadow of the command car. Brass patterned red-hot around him as the machine gun fired. The rock of cordite mingled with the smells of petrol, oil and blood in his nostrils. A mix of sweat and fear came off the sun in the command car. Cold sweat trickled in the small of Steve's back.

The plan was blown. If the car didn't cross the ridge it would not come into Bizon's field of fire. From 10 feet Steve knew that he could get one or two of the Arabs before a casual sweep of a Uzi. After switched him with 7.63 mm bullets Bizon might be able to handle the rest but his chances were poor once the heavy machine gun started to batter his small cover with steel-packeted slugs.

I'll count to 10, Steve thought, then I'll start shooting.

He started counting One, two, three . . .

The machine gun fired another burst and stopped. The gunner came and fed a fresh belt into the action.

Poor, free, me.

A harsh order from the commander stopped the firing. The Arabs

slowly began to climb out of the command car. Two of them climbed out on the far side and disappeared out of Steve's view. He cursed silently and gathered his muscles to spring, the counting discarded.

An Arab shouted hoarsely, then another. Gathered to leap, Steve looked up.

The Arabs were grinning. Not pleasant grins. Droling grins might have described it, toothy grins, gobby grins. Before he turned his head to follow their eyes Steve knew what they were looking at.

Ingrid had stood up from her hiding place among the rocks. She stood firmly, proudly, her head held up high. As Steve looked she ran hands up through her long coppery hair till they were high above her head, her shoulders braced back, her breasts jutting aggressively.

Ingrid reached down to her waist and jerked the flimsy blouse out of her skirt. With swift movements she pulled the fabric away from her body.

One of the Arabs dropped his rifle and began to walk quickly, urgently along the ridge.

Ingrid reached behind her, her shoulders straining back against each other. Her breasts lifted and spread. The blouse fell free and she flung it aside with an arrogant snap of her wrist. Even at a range of 50 yards Steve could see her pink nipples jutting from her creamy skin.

The Arabs began to run as her hands dropped to the belt of her metro skirt, her legs moving in slow, measured, gaily intoxicating undulations. Only one of them still held his rifle.

Steve came out of the scrub like a coiled spring releasing. He leapt into the command car, clawed his way up behind the heavy machine gun. His breath came in hoarse graps.

The Arabs were spread across the slope running. They called to one another in voices like hunting jockeys. Steve lunged back on the action of the gun, his fingers found the triggers.

The gun bucketed and leaped. Tracer arched out across the slope into the running Arabs. Sand boiled around them as the bullet storm found their flesh. A man screamed hoarsely, another dropped in his tracks as the heavy slug snarled him apart. Two, side by side in the rock, whirled around, their faces slick with shock and fear. One of them appeared off a burst from his Kalashnikov and Steve felt the icy burn of lead across his ribs. Then the bullet storm engulfed them.

One was left. The commander. After one startled glance over his shoulder, he had continued to run towards Ingrid. Only now he ran in short, unpredictable zig-zags, and as he ran he drew a heavy automatic from his belt.

Steve tried desperately to swing the gun across the rag-tags to drop the man, but the sand boulders missed and missed again.

Then the round eye of the night continued both legend and the Arab.

The hand was still on the belt of her low-cut microskirt and her hips continued in a pale shadow of the undulations that had forced four men to death. Now as the Arab reached her the scream howled, dark fire glistening like filth in Steve's eyes.

And she jerked the skirt free, flung it into the face of the Arab and turned herself sideways.

Steve was caught half out of the command car, too far from the gun. The Arab was slithering, cleaving the cloth away from his face, yelling shrilly in rage. The automatic in his hand spat three times blankly.

And Etienne came out of the rocks with his Uzi spitting.

Steve reached Ingrid first. She crouched on the hot sand of the slope, apparently unaware of her near nakedness, her hands at either side of her face and her eyes at her eyes and she stared at the dead Arab.

As Steve reached her she whispered deep in her throat and flung herself upwards into his arms.

"Men Gott," she whispered. "Oh, Men Gott. The blood."

"It's all right," he said. "It's all right. It's over."

"That was quite a trick," Etienne said behind them. "We would have been dead had for her."

The girl had stopped shuddering in his arms. He glanced down at her and saw that the color was coming back to her face. She pushed closer to him if it were possible and there was a trace of the old impudence in her face as she looked up at him.

"Did you catch my act, Steve?"

Steve let out his breath in a gigantic exhalation.

"Catch it," he said. "I'll never forget it."

"I must do it again," she said. "Only next time to a more select audience. Oh, my, my."

Steve felt all the tension breaking out of him in one great shout of laughter. Behind him he heard Etienne laughing, too. Slowly and with great care he beat his mouth to turn and she responded eagerly.

"Darling," she said. "It's a date."

